

# MODERN LANGUAGE QUARTERLY

---

March, 1957

---

A. GROVE DAY. <i>Hawaiian Echoes in Melville's 'Mardi'</i> . . . . .	3
NORMAN FRIEDMAN. <i>The Jangled Harp: Symbolic Structure in 'Modern Love'</i> . . . . .	9
HERBERT BLAU. <i>Language and Structure in Poetic Drama</i> . . . . .	27
DON CAMERON ALLEN. <i>An Explication of Lovelace's "The Grasse-bopper"</i> . . . . .	35
W. T. H. JACKSON. <i>The Composition of 'Meier Helmbrecht'</i> . . . . .	44
GEORGE B. WATTS. <i>Catherine II, Charles-Joseph Pauckoucke, and the Kehl Edition of Voltaire's 'Œuvres'</i> . . . . .	59
JAMES DOOLITTLE. <i>The Function of 'La Colère de Samson' in 'Les Destinées'</i> . . . . .	63
RALPH BEHRENS. <i>Baudelaire and Rimbaud: Their Voyages</i> . . . . .	69
REVIEWS . . . . .	71
BOOKS RECEIVED . . . . .	78

---

Volume Eighteen

Number One

---

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON PRESS  
SEATTLE

# MODERN LANGUAGE QUARTERLY

Edited by

EDWARD GODFREY COX  
*Managing Editor*

EMILY E. JOHNSON  
*Editorial Associate*

DUDLEY D. GRIFFITH

CARROLL E. REED

ABRAHAM C. KELLER

*Direct Contributions and Business Correspondence to*  
Managing Editor, Modern Language Quarterly  
Parrington Hall  
University of Washington  
Seattle 5

Subscription price \$3.50 per year • Single copies \$1.00  
Issued in March, June, September, December

Indexed in the *International Index to Periodicals*

Entered as second-class matter May 6, 1940, at the post office at Seattle, Washington,  
under the Act of March 3, 1879

PRINTED IN U. S. A.







# MODERN LANGUAGE QUARTERLY

---

Volume Eighteen

March, 1957

Number One

---

## ARTICLES

- A. Grove Day. Hawaiian Echoes in Melville's *Mardi* ..... 3
- Norman Friedman. The Jangled Harp: Symbolic Structure  
in *Modern Love* ..... 9
- Herbert Blau. Language and Structure in Poetic Drama ..... 27
- Don Cameron Allen. An Explication of Lovelace's  
"The Grasse-hopper" ..... 35
- W. T. H. Jackson. The Composition of *Meier Helmbrecht* ..... 44
- George B. Watts. Catherine II, Charles-Joseph Panckoucke, and  
the Kehl Edition of Voltaire's *Œuvres* ..... 59
- James Doolittle. The Function of *La Colère de Samson*  
in *Les Destinées* ..... 63
- Ralph Behrens. Baudelaire and Rimbaud: Their Voyages ..... 69

## REVIEWS

- H. J. Oliver. The Problem of John Ford [*George F. Sensabaugh*] 71
- A. Lytton Sells. The Italian Influence in English Poetry from  
Chaucer to Southwell [*John Leon Lievsay*] ..... 73
- Edmund P. Kremer. German Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases  
with Their English Counterparts [*J. Beattie MacLean*] ..... 74
- Books Received ..... 78



## HAWAIIAN ECHOES IN MELVILLE'S *MARDI*

By A. GROVE DAY

A surprisingly large number of allusions to the Hawaiian Islands and Hawaiian customs can be found in Herman Melville's *Mardi*, if we consider that the setting of this novel presents a fictional and allegorical microcosm, and that none of the action takes place in the Hawaiian archipelago. Not all of the allusions studied here have been previously noted.

The mysterious brigantine that the narrator and Jarl board at sea (Chapter 22)<sup>1</sup> turns out to be "the *Parki*, of Lahaina, a village and harbor on the coast of Mowee." Lahaina is the port on Maui where Melville first landed in the Hawaiian Islands. "Her appellation had been bestowed in honor of a high chief, the tallest and goodliest looking gentleman in all the Sandwich Islands." This chief was undoubtedly Paki, who was taking an active part in the government at the time of Melville's sojourn.<sup>2</sup>

Willard Thorp,<sup>3</sup> as early as 1938, first pointed out that

the description of surfboard-riding in the chapter entitled "Rare Sport at Ohonoo" recalls what Melville had seen at Waikiki beach on Oahu and that the valley where the visitors feasted (Monlova) is really Manoa. There are many other passages which substantially refer to Hawaiian geography and history. Chapter XCII—"The God Keevi and the Precipice of Mondo"—describes, for instance, the cliff of the Pali over which, in 1795, the conquering invader Kamehameha drove scores of the defenders to their death on the rocks below.

The island of Ohonoo (Chapters 89-92) is presumably Oahu, the capital of the Hawaiian group. Melville refers to it, in Chapter 89, as meaning "the Isle of Rogues," and attempts to give an historical explanation of this name. He then goes on to make a specific but baffling statement:

And even as before they had been weeded out of the surrounding countries; so now, they went to weeding out themselves; banishing all the objectionable persons to still another island. These events happened at a period so remote, that at present it was uncertain whether those twice banished, were thrust into their second exile by reason of their superlative knavery, or because of their comparative honesty. If the latter, then must the residue have been a precious enough set of scoundrels.

<sup>1</sup> *Mardi*; and *a Voyage Thither* (New York and London, 1849).

<sup>2</sup> See R. S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom* (Honolulu, 1938), pp. 285, 424.

<sup>3</sup> *Herman Melville*, American Writers Series (New York, 1938), p. lxvi, n. 103.

The sardonic reference to the expulsion of objectionable people who may by comparison have been honest seems to me to refer to a specific event in Hawaiian history.<sup>4</sup> The first Catholic missionaries in these islands were deported to Mexican California in 1831, four years after their arrival in Honolulu. They were expelled by the ruling chiefs, who were instigated to the act, it has been charged, by the Protestant missionaries, who had first begun their labors in 1820. These two priests returned in 1837 and were again sent away, but a member of a second band, the Rev. Columba Murphy, a jolly Irishman, was allowed to stay when the British consul stated, contrary to fact, that he had not been ordained as a priest. Melville later became quite friendly with Murphy, who visited him at the Calabooza in Tahiti in 1842,<sup>5</sup> and who might have told him the story of the expulsions. Melville, as is well known, was not a champion of the Protestant missionaries in the Pacific, and it is not inconceivable that they are the people of Ohonoo (Chapter 89) who, "the more numerous and mighty they waxed, by so much the more did they take pride and glory in their origin, frequently reverting to it with manifold boastings."

The description of the approach to Ohonoo in Chapter 90 of *Mardi* seems to be a picture painted from life, for it gives a view of the approach to Honolulu such as Melville might have seen it when he arrived in 1843. Likewise, the description of hundreds of natives at play on surfboards could have been witnessed by him at Waikiki or at Lahaina, Maui. He was undoubtedly familiar, as noted by David Jaffé,<sup>6</sup> with the passage on surfboarding in William Ellis,<sup>7</sup> for Ellis was a main source for his Polynesian books; but the only close parallel in Melville's description seems to be his remark that the board is "invariably oiled after use; and hung up conspicuously in the dwelling of the owner."

The description of the valley of Monlova in Chapter 92 of *Mardi* does not fit Manoa Valley but rather that of Nuuanu, which leads from Honolulu to the celebrated panorama of the Pali; and Melville's impressions of this windy palisade are still fitting today. His mention that "From this brink, spear in hand, sprang fifty rebel warriors, driven back into the vale by a superior force" undoubtedly refers to the climax of the battle of Nuuanu in 1795 which Ellis recites (IV, 16-17), although Ellis numbers the warriors who took the fatal plunge as four hundred. Ellis goes on to mention the spot where the defeated king of Oahu cast his last spear; Melville transforms this spot, however, into a ledge on the brink of the precipice where the monarchs of

<sup>4</sup> See R. S. Kuykendall and A. Grove Day, *Hawaii: A History* (New York, 1948), Chap. 7.

<sup>5</sup> See Herman Melville, *Omoo* (New York and London, 1847), Chap. 37.

<sup>6</sup> "Some Sources of Melville's *Mardi*," *American Literature*, IX (1937), 60-62.

<sup>7</sup> *Polynesian Researches During a Residence of Nearly Eight Years in the Society and Sandwich Islands*, 2nd ed. (London, 1831), IV, 369-71.

Ohonoo proved their legitimacy by standing as a target for javelins—a custom elsewhere noted by Ellis (IV, 149).

A final comparison between Melville's Ohonoo and the Oahu described by Ellis is found in the mention in *Mardi* (Chapter 92) that "Flanking the precipice, beneath beetling rocks, stand the guardian deities of Mondo; and on altars before them, are placed the propitiatory offerings of the traveler." Ellis (IV, 15) speaks of the stone idols which the natives called "gods of the Pali" and to which offerings were made "to render them propitious."

Not all the Hawaiian references are confined to the chapters on Ohonoo. Another setting which is mentioned by Ellis but which Melville could himself have observed is that of the fishponds that were the hobby of the gluttonous monarch of Mondoldo (Chapter 94). Again the scene is too extensive and too specific to be allegory. Jaffé cites several descriptions of fishponds in Melville's source reading, including Ellis; but Kamehameha's ponds of Kiholo on the Kona Coast, described by Ellis (IV, 407), are quite different from those in *Mardi*. Melville could quite easily have had in mind such ponds as those still remaining on Oahu on the shores of Kaneohe Bay. Suitable to the Hawaiian Islands of Melville's time is his remark: "Fresh-water fish are only to be obtained in Mondoldo by the artificial process above mentioned; as the streams and brooks abound not in trout or other Waltonian prey." In the days of the Hawaiian monarchy, the fishponds were a regal monopoly, and the mullet raised there were always tabu except for the royal family.

Several references appear in *Mardi* to Captain James Cook's adventures in the Sandwich Islands. In Chapter 53, the narrator is accepted by the natives of the archipelago as the avatar of their god Taji, even as Cook was identified by the Hawaiians as their god Lono and later killed by them. "The sad fate of an eminent navigator," observes the newly christened Taji, "is a well-known illustration of this unaccountable waywardness." He recurs in Chapter 57 to the story of Cook, who "was hailed by the Hawaiians as one of their demi-gods, returned to earth, after a wide tour of the universe." When Yillah is described in Chapter 100 as the daughter of white beings in "a mighty canoe," the story runs: "All went well between our people and the gods, till at last they slew three of our countrymen, charged with stealing from their great canoe." It is well known that the theft of a ship's boat and other goods was the immediate cause of the incident that culminated in Cook's death. Indeed, Ellis quotes an eyewitness as saying: "The foreigner was not to blame; for, in the first instance, our people stole his boat" (IV, 131).

The name of Hevaneva in Chapter 114, the businesslike idol-maker of the island of Maramma, is clearly, as Merrell R. Davis<sup>8</sup> says, drawn from that of Hevaheva, high priest of the Hawaiian war god, who as

<sup>8</sup> Melville's *Mardi*: *A Chartless Voyage* (New Haven, 1952), p. 152, n. 1.

Ellis notes (IV, 127, 158) took the lead in abolishing the idols of Hawaii in 1819. Hevaheva's attitude, according to the various reports that remain to us, seems to have been one of frank discouragement with the efficacy of the old wooden images and a practical but not cynical desire to replace them.

Ellis is not the sole source of material from Hawaii. It is known that a favorite reference for Melville's Polynesian books, particularly *Typee*, was Charles S. Stewart's *A Visit to the South Seas in the U. S. Ship Vincennes* (New York, 1831). It is possible that another book by Stewart, *Journal of a Residence in the Sandwich Islands* (New York and London, 1828; 5th edition, revised and enlarged, Boston, 1839), although listed neither by Charles R. Anderson<sup>9</sup> nor Davis, would also have appealed to Melville; and several comparable passages seem to support this idea. In Chapter 95 of *Mardi*, the lord of Mondoldo is shown "regaling himself with one of his favorite cuttlefish, its long snaky arms and feelers instinctively twining round his head as he ate." Stewart's *Residence* (5th ed., pp. 151-52) gives a horrifying picture of Panahi, one of the queens of Kamehameha II, eating a "monstrous cuttlefish" alive, "while the long sucking arms of the fish, in the convulsive paroxysm of the operation, were twisting and writhing about her head, like the snaky hairs of a Medusa." Again, in Chapter 143, Babbalanja explains that the mass of Mardians do not believe that the world is round, "for all who have eyes must assuredly see, that the sun seems to move, and that Mardi seems a fixture, eternally *here*." Stewart's *Residence* (5th ed., p. 193) quotes some chiefs who, "as an insurmountable objection to the truth of the rotatory motion of the earth, pointed to the opposite island, and said, '*The world cannot turn around, for Lanai is always exactly there!*'"

Melville's narrator spends a paragraph in Chapter 68 on the Hawaiian custom of striking out one's teeth as a sign of mourning, and says: "Still living in Oahu are many old chiefs, who were present at the famous obsequies of their royal old generalissimo, Tammahammaha [Kamehameha I], when there is no telling how many pounds of ivory were cast upon his grave." In a succeeding paragraph he conjures up the ghost of "tattooed Tammahammaha," and says later that in Valapee, "Nor yet prevails the savage Hawaiian custom of offering up teeth to the manes of the dead." Davis quite properly indicates (p. 146, n. 5) that the source of the passage on the knocking out of teeth is Ellis (IV, 176); but Stewart's *Residence* (5th ed., p. 166) also mentions that at the death of a chief, "Their grief was expressed by . . . knocking out their eyes and teeth with clubs and stones." I am unable to find in Ellis or any other work, however, any mention that Kamehameha I was tattooed, nor is his face shown thus in the celebrated portrait by Louis Choris, the only one made during the king's lifetime.

<sup>9</sup> Melville in the South Seas (New York, 1939).

The young king Donjalolo of Juam (Chapters 71-85) bears several resemblances to Kamehameha III, reigning monarch of the Hawaiian kingdom when Melville visited there in 1843. Donjalolo has just turned twenty-five, and is accounted the handsomest man in his dominions; when Melville arrived in his kingdom, Kamehameha III was twenty-nine and was attractive in appearance. Donjalolo is described, after his accession, as gradually falling "into desperate courses. . . . At times, loathing his vicious pursuits . . . he would resolve to amend his ways; solacing himself for his bitter captivity, by the society of the wise and discreet. But brief the interval of repentance. Anew, he burst into excesses, a hundred fold more insane than ever" (Chapter 73). This passage may refer to the young Hawaiian monarch's well-known lapses between 1832 and 1834.<sup>10</sup> Again, "for all his multiplicity of wives, he [Donjalolo] had never an heir." Kamehameha III had only one wife, and no son; his predecessor and elder brother, Kamehameha II, had five wives and no son.

Donjalolo's ancestor, Marjora the usurper, may well be Kamehameha I, who was not the legitimate claimant to the throne and who, after a career of warfare, first united all the Hawaiian Islands under one ruler. The conflict between Marjora and Teei might have been suggested by Ellis' story of Kamehameha I and his cousin and rival, Keoua, who was murdered by one of Kamehameha's henchmen.<sup>11</sup>

Donjalolo, king of Juam, bears some resemblance to Uhia, king of Ohonoo [Oahu].<sup>12</sup> Both love luxury, and both are ambitious. Uhia in his youth had shaken off the embraces of womankind and devoted himself to what he believed to be his destiny—the fulfillment of a prophecy that Ohonoo would achieve "the dominion of the entire Archipelago." Uhia curses the gods (Chapter 91) for depriving him of rights that he never possessed: "Here am I cooped up in this

<sup>10</sup> See Kuykendall, *Hawaiian Kingdom*, pp. 134-35.

<sup>11</sup> Davis (p. 147, n. 6) goes astray in comparing the death of Donjalolo's ancestor Teei, at the hand of Marjora, with the "victory of Tamehameha over the king of Oahu at the 'Pari,'" for Teei's battle was fought beneath the cliffs of a glen, not at the brink of a precipice. Davis is also not clear, in the same note, in referring to Kamehameha's "victory over his cousin Kei, whose name is like that of Donjalolo's uncle, Teei." Ellis clearly identifies Kei as "a considerable village on the south point of Kearakekua Bay" (IV, 141), and in speaking of Keoua says: "After the battle of Kei, in which his brother was slain, he [Keoua] fled to Hiro . . ." (IV, 209).

Davis suggests (in correspondence of Feb. 28, 1957) that it is possible that Melville incorporated, in his description of the battle in which Teei is killed at the hand of Marjora (*Mardi*, Chap. 72), suggestions from (1) Ellis, IV, 16-17, in which Tamehameha defeats "the king" of Oahu in the "valley of Anuanu" and at the precipice of "Pari," and (2) Ellis, IV, 146-47, in which Tamehameha defeats his cousin Kauikeouli, whose name appears to have been reconstructed by Melville as Teei, from the "battle of Kei" (IV, 209) in which the defeat took place.

<sup>12</sup> In a discourse on the history of Ohonoo in Chap. 89, Babbalanja refers to a character from the history of Juam: "Many great scoundrels of our Chronicler's chronicles are heroes to us:—witness, Marjora the usurper."

insignificant islet, only one hundred leagues by fifty, when scores of broad empires own me not for their lord." Both Donjalolo and Uhia are individual heroes of romance; but both may have been modeled somewhat on the only Polynesian king that Melville saw with his own eyes—His Hawaiian Majesty Kamehameha III.

*University of Hawaii*



## THE JANGLED HARP SYMBOLIC STRUCTURE IN *MODERN LOVE*

By NORMAN FRIEDMAN

Where came the cleft between us? whose the fault (VIII)?

Meredith's sequence of fifty *seizains* concludes with the following lines:

Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul  
When hot for certainties in this our life!—  
In tragic hints here see what evermore  
Moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's force,  
Thundering like ramping hosts of warrior horse,  
To throw that faint thin line upon the shore!

Speaking of the latitude of interpretation possible in this passage, C. Day Lewis speculates,

What is it that "evermore moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's force"? Is it death? Is it the truth which the poet has just declared to be so elusive for the soul "hot for certainties in this our life"? Is it not something that subsumes both—the circumbient Unknown whose volume of mystery presses upon the mortal heart and breaking there, leaves only a "faint thin line" of experience by which its force may be felt, its nature dimly understood?

After these rather suggestive remarks he goes on to say:

If this image falls a little short of perfection, it is not because it fails to supply a key to the pattern it reveals, but because its own surface pattern is over-complicated: the "ramping hosts of warrior horse", a simile within the simile, distract us, with a too vivid suggestion of some inimical force, from the main theme.<sup>1</sup>

But since Lewis has apparently forgotten, in his puzzlement over this insertion of the horse simile within the sea simile, not only that the horse-sea linkage is a standard mythological one (Poseidon-chariot-chargers-waves) but also that it is a very frequent one in Meredith's poetry, we may wonder if he has not somewhat confused the point of the entire poem here at its culmination. Nor do other Meredithians offer any more specific interpretations.<sup>2</sup> As the passage cited above

<sup>1</sup> *The Poetic Image* (London, 1947), pp. 59, 81-85, and 102.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Richard Le Gallienne, *George Meredith: Some Characteristics* (London and New York, 1890 [1905, 6th ed., rev.]), pp. 112, 132; George M. Trevelyan, *Poetry and Philosophy of George Meredith* (New York, 1906); M. Sturge Henderson, *George Meredith: Novelist, Poet, Reformer* (New York, 1907), pp. 4-5, 62; Basil de Selincourt, in Henderson, p. 242; Richard H. P. Curle, *Aspects of George Meredith* (London and New York, 1908), p. 196; J. G. Jennings, *Essay on Metaphor in Poetry* (London, 1915), pp. 72 ff.; René Galland, *George Meredith: Les Cinquante Premières Années* (Paris, 1923), pp. 140 ff.; I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (New York and London, 1924), pp. 123-24; J. B. Priestly, *George Meredith* (New York, 1926), Chap. IV; Leo C. Robertson, "Meredith the Poet," *English Review*, XLIV (1927), 463-71;

and Lewis' efforts to explain it show, we are dealing with an extraordinarily complex poem, and it is nowhere more complex than in its figurative and symbolic imagery. I will attempt to clarify this imagery by tracing its relationships to the action of the poem as a whole and the manner of its presentation—matters which need in themselves some clarification.

However, I think it is Meredith's best poem for the same reason that it is a complex one: it is the record of the man he was in the process of becoming, so to speak, the man he is. Both biographically and aesthetically this poem and its background represent the most crucial transition point in Meredith's life. Just as he suffered through the personal tragedy which brought to a dismal close his marriage with Mary Peacock Nicolls before achieving a lasting union with Marie Vulliamy, so he wrestled in *Modern Love* with a set of attitudes and images which were to become the very foundation of his later work. Thus, while his early poetry is characterized by a pseudo-Keatsian lushness ("Wildly she flutters, / And flushes all over / With passionate mutters" etc.) and a pseudo-Browningsque heartiness ("Ay, when we're strong, and braced, and manful, / Life's a sweet fiddle"), the poems following *Modern Love* are characterized by an austere optimism and a hardy texture which are his alone. Yet whatever virtues these latter may contain—and there are many—they lack the *natura naturans* of *Modern Love*. It is a poem of grating ironies, giddily reversing emotions, rapidly shifting images, and subtly blended techniques.

## I

Before detailing its symbolic structure, then, a brief account of the plot itself is perhaps in order. The action falls, making due allowances for shifts and complexities, into three distinct phases: (1) the development and amplification of the husband's ambivalence toward his wife (whom he alludes to as "Madam") in I-XXVI, (2) his attempt to find release in an affair with another woman (whom he alludes to as "Lady") in XXVII-XXXIX, and (3) his final and ill-fated reconciliation with his wife in XL-L. The action turns upon the husband's developing attitudes, highlighted by the narrator's concluding commentary cited above, toward his own role in this tragedy; and the time-span is apparently a little more than a year, for it is spring in XI, Christmas in XXIII, and summer in XLV.<sup>3</sup>

George H. W. Rylands, *Words and Poetry* (London, 1928), pp. 69-70; Heinz Walz, "George Meredith's Early Works and Their Significance for His Personal Development," *George Meredith and His German Critics*, ed. Guy B. Petter (London, 1939), pp. 172-75; E. K. Chambers, "Meredith's 'Modern Love,'" *A Sheaf of Studies* (Oxford, 1942), pp. 71-83 [written 1897]; and Lionel Stevenson, *Ordeal of George Meredith* (New York, 1953), pp. 103-106.

<sup>3</sup> All the citations to Meredith's poetry are from *Poetical Works*, ed. G. M. Trevelyan (London, 1912). In the interests of simplicity, however, I cite the passages from *Modern Love* (pp. 133-55) solely by section number. All italics therein are mine.

We are introduced in the first phase to a young married couple who are miserable in their union. They have somehow lost that which originally brought them together, yet their memory of past love prevents them from making a decisive break. The wife, ostensibly neglected by a husband who "plotted to be worthy of the world" (X) and who is no longer temperamentally in sympathy with her, has consoled herself with another man. The rest of this portion hinges upon a series of conflicts within the husband: first, has she merely committed adultery in a moment of weakness, or has she actually fallen in love with the other man? and second, how can he come to terms with his own insistent desire for her in the face of her apparent defection? "Yea! filthiness of body is most vile, / But faithlessness of heart I do hold worse" (VII).

This ambivalence creates the central movement of the poem: the husband is caught between the upper and nether millstones of his own passion on the one hand and his fight against his wife's now hateful beauty on the other, between his own demand that love result in a spiritual union and his crying need for sexual release and revenge. One impulse blocks the path of the other; his finer feelings are constantly being shattered by his baser instincts, and yet all the while he is trying to keep a brave front to the world, thereby increasing the tension immeasurably. Having lost faith in himself, he no longer can trust his wife, feeling now vindictive and cynical, now self-pitying and sentimental: "But where began the change; and what's my crime?" (X).

In the second phase he finds a temporary outlet in dallying with his blonde mistress, but this frankly adulterous affair fails outright simply because he cannot sustain the necessary selfish callousness: "I must be flattered," he crows, in XXVIII, but then laments, in XXXVIII, trying to escape the shame (to him) of a merely sexual liaison, "let me love." And besides, he is still secretly jealous of his wife's lover.

In the third phase we see how Madam's reciprocal jealousy of her husband's Lady betrays them into a fraudulent renewal of their marital relations. Although this attempt must fail, because it is just as unhallowed as his adultery in that it is just as spiteful and loveless, it leads directly, through his morning-after repentance, to his ultimate insight: "I see no sin: / The wrong is mixed" (XLIII). Having accepted sex without love, he finally sees himself as he really is and finds it in his heart to pity her. She, however, although proud and sensitive, is not as capable of facing the truth: she cannot accept his pity and, when he confesses to her his affair with his Lady, is nobly but mistakenly driven to "free" him to seek the other woman. Thus he, who "looked for peace" at last "in the pure daylight of honest speech" as a means back toward a more honest reunion, unwittingly causes her death. She runs off to the seashore where he finds her willing to become truly his wife again only in death. He kisses her as she

dies from a self-administered dose of poison. A romantic to the end, she will never again awaken to find her dream gone.

A "sonnet"-sequence with a difference, this poem presents its action through a bizarre mixture of techniques. Although there is a plot, it is not presented directly as such. On the one hand, there is a definite "story" unfolding before us, involving four people and containing a beginning, middle, and end; and on the other, it is neither told by means of narration nor shown by means of dialogue. There is an omniscient narrator who speaks in I-IX and XLIX-L, and there is an occasional moment of actual dialogue (e.g., IX, XXV), but most of the poem (X-XLVIII) is spoken by the husband as both protagonist and commentator. Although he sometimes narrates directly and comments upon the action (e.g., XVII, XXI, XXXIV), most of the time he is shown responding privately, either just before or just after a scene, by means of interior monologues in which he laments his situation, displays his feelings, reflects upon and interprets his wife's actions, makes decisions, and so on. On several occasions he apparently speaks directly to Madam or his Lady (e.g., XI, XIV, XXIV, XXVII, XXVIII), but even there he seems to be doing so only in his mind. Thus most of the poem is taken up with his internal responses to various stimuli stated or implied within each speech, and is therefore "lyric" in technique although dramatic in form. In consequence, the reader must guess at the line of the action in terms of the husband's responses to it.

In so presenting this story through the medium of his protagonist's consciousness, Meredith has fashioned an appropriate instrument for revealing the husband's changes in thought and feeling, around which the action turns, in what we think of now as the manner of Henry James. It remains, then, to explicate the specific conceptual materials in terms of which these changes take place.

The key moral ideas informing this action derive from the Meredithian "triad," for he regards man's nature as triple: Spirit (or soul) emerging from the creative union of Blood (body) and Brain (mind). This harmony is called Wisdom; its absence is Egoism, which takes four coordinate forms, each connoting an excessive striving after Spirit or Blood or Brain alone, and each finding itself therefore paradoxically reversed, "singularly doomed / To what [it] execrates and writhes to shun" (p. 245). Thus, the cynic (who denies the soul) is a frustrated sentimentalist (who abhors the body and neglects the mind) or an idealist turned inside out; while the "pinched" ascetic (who denies the body) is a sated or disillusioned sensualist (who revels in the body) or a prurient hypocrite. These are pejorative terms in Meredith's vocabulary, and they comprise his dictionary of moral cowardice: the unwillingness to reconcile oneself with the apparent ambiguity of Nature on the one hand, and one's own ambivalence on the other. And thus the curve of the husband's change in *Modern Love*, in contrast to the wife's pathetic inability to change and her

tragic suicide as a result, can be plotted in terms of a progression through his early sentimentalism, to his subsequent cynicism and half-hearted sensualism, and on to a balanced wisdom which reveals to him his own egoism as a cause of the failure of his marriage.

Containing a dramatic plot of tragic self-discovery shown through a lyric-narrative medium, this poem has as the ultimate cause of its complexity, in so far as the reader is concerned, the fact that both the narrator's and the protagonist's thoughts and feelings are so often expressed figuratively and symbolically. It is this relationship between action and image to which we now turn.

## II

Swinburne, taking issue with a hostile review of *Modern Love* soon after the poem first appeared in 1862, claimed that "every section of this great progressive poem [is] connected with the other by links of the finest and most studied workmanship."<sup>4</sup> It is true that there are some rather obvious links, such as the repetition of the line, "she has that rare gift / To beauty, Common Sense," in XXXI and XXXII; or the foreshadowing of the second phase of the action in XIV and XIX, and of the wife's suicide in XXXV, and so on. Yet, in attempting to grasp the interrelationships among the images which form the dense underwebbing or substructure of the poem, we must be prepared to trace a much less "studied" series of linkages and recurrences, which we will find tend to cluster around one key concept or another as it takes shape from the symbolic elements through which it is expressed.<sup>5</sup>

We shall see, first, how the sentimentalism of the husband and wife is expressed in terms of time-torpor-game-sun-wing imagery; next, how the husband's disillusionment is expressed in terms of murder-knife-wound-blood imagery, and his sensualism in terms of snare-bat-cage-pit-beast imagery; third, how he sees his wife in consequence in terms of snake-venom-poison imagery; fourth, how the whole poem is shrouded in a midnight-tomb-ghost-skeleton-grave-shadow atmosphere; and, finally, how the ultimate wisdom achieved by the husband is expressed in terms of the music-wave-horse-mark-on-shore imagery cited at the beginning of this paper.

To begin with, *Modern Love* reveals an Egoist in the throes of purgation. The husband of the poem is a sentimentalist gone wrong, alternating between cynicism and sensualism in a feverish effort to achieve peace—a peace which is won neither early nor easily. The touchstone for the recognition of a sentimentalist is his attitude toward

<sup>4</sup> In *Spectator*, June 7, 1862; the hostile review appeared May 24. Cf. J. A. Hammerton, *George Meredith in Anecdote and Criticism* (New York and London, 1909), p. 101, and Maurice Buxton Forman, *George Meredith: Some Early Appreciations* (London, 1909), p. 101.

<sup>5</sup> Harold D. Lasswell et al., *Comparative Study of Symbols: An Introduction*, Hoover Institute Studies, Series C: Symbols, No. 1 (Stanford, 1952), p. 65 et passim.

Time, and the final section of the series offers as an analysis of the couple's plight the fact that "they fed not on the advancing *hours*: / Their hearts held cravings for the buried day." The Egoist is impatient with the wheeling of Earth's great cycles, and insists upon an ideal permanence over and above natural change. Thus the husband, in III, accuses himself: "The *hour* has struck, though I heard not the bell!" Or again, in IV, if he tries to grasp some fleeting joy, sensualist-wise, in his otherwise miserable life, "'twas but to show / The coming *minute* mock the one that went." In XII "the whole / Of life is mixed," and the past carries a heavy freight of corrosive memories which dissolve both the present and the future:

Methinks with all this loss I were content,  
If the mad *Past*, on which my foot is based,  
Were firm, or might be blotted. . . .

And, in the next, Nature seems callously to say, "I play for *Seasons*; not Eternities!"—a projected attitude which is the end product of an excessive idealism. So, in XXIX the past persists in failing him in his attempt to effect a satisfactory liaison with his blonde mistress:

For no longer can I cast  
A glory round about this head of gold.  
Glory she wears, but springing from the mould;  
Not like the consecration of the *Past*!

His sensualism will not down; his perspective is out of focus because he is trying to set his "Love's old *time-piece*" to another woman, and "Swear it can't stop" (XIX). Finally, the wife, in a desperate gesture, tries to pretend that their dead vows are still alive by a renewal of their physical relations: "I am to follow her. . . . The hands / Of *Time* now signal: O, she's safe from me!" But his pride falls, and the ensuing section recounts his morning-after meditations upon those "unblest kisses" of the previous night (XLII-XLIII).

As a consequence of this distorted view of Time, the entire poem is pervaded by a thick and heavy atmosphere of sultry immobility, of frozen will and suspended desire. It is a half-world fixed at the dead center of the spinning vortex of a soul divided against itself. So the opening section, which finds the pair in bed, sets the tone: "the long darkness flowed away / With *muffled* pulses." And in the second, portraying the following morning, "A *languid* humour stole among the hours." In XVI the husband muses over one evening in the "shipwrecked" past when she protested against the thought that love must eventually die: "and hushed we sat / As lovers to whom Time is *whispering*." Coming back to the present, he gets a sudden sense of this oppressive weight in an encounter with his wife which results, like so many others, in callous and vindictive commonplace: "Our chain on *silence* clanks. / Time leers between, above his twiddling thumbs" (XXXIV). In XXXVII the husband, his wife, and his



mistress are incredibly among a group of house guests awaiting the dinner bell:

we care not if the bell be late:  
Though here and there grey seniors *question Time*  
In irritable coughings.

An attempt at a real understanding is finally made in XLVI. Thus face to face at last, they are "strangely *dumb* / In such a close communion." This meeting occurs "About the sounding of the Matin-bell"; abruptly she rises, suddenly leaving him alone with Time: "and the *hum* / Of loneliness was round me."

A counterweight to this torpid and viscous atmosphere is provided by the game-motif, which functions as the vehicle of their nervous frustration seeking an outlet. Since the sentimentalist cannot incorporate the fact of change into his scheme of values, his behavior resolves ultimately into a kind of manic-depressive shift: sometimes he is sunk under an oppressive cloud, sometimes he is gay and superficial—all in the effort to ignore and gloss over the reality of the situation. Forced to keep a brave front to the world, the husband and wife try to act witty and bright in social contexts, to the final detriment of whatever shreds of self-respect they have left. It is a stubborn, childish, and petulant attempt to pretend that things have not altered one bit. Thus, for example, in XIV the husband discovers that his wife—although she was the first to take a lover—is jealous of his mistress. He comments wryly: "Such love I prize not, madam: by your leave, / The *game* you play at is not to my mind."

In XVII we are taken into the core of this tension. They are entertaining dinner guests, and the wife is doing a skillful job of keeping the conversational ball rolling, but the husband cannot refrain from musing upon the grim irony of the occasion:

With sparkling surface-eyes we ply the ball:  
It is in truth a most contagious *game*:  
HIDING THE SKELETON, shall be its name.

This motif recurs in connection with his mistress as well. Tired of the effort required to suppress his sexual desire in order to sustain his self-respect, he decides deliberately to cloak his sensualism ("the passion of a demon") beneath the veil of sentimentalism: "Lady, I am content / To play with you the *game* of Sentiment" (XXVII-XXVIII).

We return to a rather more literal use of the word in XXXV where, commenting upon the sensitivity of his wife's nature, and feeling momentarily sympathetic toward her plight, he pulls himself up short at the thought of a recent encounter:

At Forfeits during snow we *played*, and I  
Must kiss her. "Well performed!" I said: then she:  
"Tis hardly worth the money, you agree?"  
Save her? what for? To *act* this wedded lie!

An unfortunate situation, indeed, where sterile pretense—both one's own and that of the other—witheres the heart's desire.

In spite of having agreed to play the game of sentiment with his mistress, the husband is not long in discovering its futility. In XXXVIII he utters an agonizing complaint against his own lust; he can no longer merely play at love, in reality a "hideous human game" which shames the devils:

Imagination urging appetite! . . .  
Imagination is the charioteer  
That, in default of better, drives the hogs.

At the center of this sentimentalism-time-torpor-game cluster lies, curiously enough, the image of the sun. Normally a paradisaical symbol of the Ideal (cf. its use in Dante's *Paradiso*), the sun in Meredith's poetry serves nevertheless infernally as a vehicle of excessive idealism. Thus, in X, the husband speaks of the sentimental character of the love upon which their marriage was based: "Love's jealous woods about the *sun* are curled; / At least, the *sun* far brighter there did beam." Or again, in XXVIII, where he agrees to "play" with his Lady "the game of Sentiment," he demands that their relationship be that of sun (male) to sunflower (female):

And men shall see me as a burning *sphere*;  
And men shall mark you eyeing me, and groan  
To be the God of such a grand sunflower!

And, as we know, this superior-inferior relationship is the desire which, for Meredith, signalizes the sexual Egoist. This sentimental view of love (which "conquers" death) recurs in XXX, where "Love, the crowning *sun*" dissolves "the distant shadow of the tomb."

Whence comes this atypical usage? Some helpful clues are to be found in Meredith's later work. In the *Comic Spirit*, for instance, Egoism is imaged as "our slavish self's infernal *sun*" (p. 396), and in *The Empty Purse* a demagogue is to his followers "the *sun* of their system a father of flies!" (p. 447). But in *The Woods* supplies us with the central passage. Here the poet is perhaps speaking of the situation in *Modern Love*—he once sought love, he says, by looking "above":

But the love I saw was a fitful thing;  
I looked on the *sun*  
That clouds or is blinding aglow;  
And the love around had more of *wing*  
Than substance, and of spirit none.

He continues by asserting that he found substantial love only after learning to look "on the green earth we are rooted in," and seeing "good and evil at strife, / And the struggle upward of all." This way lies harmony and wisdom: "Was love farther to seek?" (p. 344). Too much sun-gazing blinds us to Earth and her teachings of the necessary complexity and ambiguity of life.



The sun-wing linkage in the above passage brings us to the final section of the poem: "These two were rapid falcons in a snare, / Condemned to do the flitting of the bat." This image signifies, in the first place, the unresolved ambivalence, or manic-depressive state, which permeates the poem. The sentimental lover will not face the problem of integrating sex and love—he wants to have one without the other, pretending physical passion is that other. He is doomed perpetually to strain after Artemis and find Aphrodite within his embrace. So the idealist leads a Jekyll and Hyde existence, eating his "pot of honey on the grave" (XXIX), seeing his eagle become a serpent (XXVI) and his falcon a bat. And the falcon is, in the second place, a sun-striving bird, one who dwells in remote heavens and inaccessible crags, functioning, therefore, as the vehicle of bodiless, spiritless, romantic love.

### III

We come now to the Mr. Hyde phase of the poem. Cynic and sensualist are inverted idealists; "mincing the facts of life" (X) soon denudes it of value altogether. In section L the narrator explains that mutual distrust is what killed their love: "Then each applied to each that fatal knife, / Deep questioning, which probes to endless dole." They developed a fatal capacity for seeing "through simulation to the bone" (XLIV), and were cursed with the ability to "interpret where the mouth is dumb," to "see the side-lie of a truth" (XXVI). Thus idealized love becomes, in the hands of the sentimentalist, a two-edged "sword that severs all," the symbolic sword which lies between the couple as they lie comfortless upon their marriage-bed-tomb in section I.

We discover this murder-knife-wound-blood imagery throughout. In II, for example, the disillusioned husband sees that "the world, forgot, / Looked wicked as some old dull murder-spot." What has been murdered is, of course, their love. Again, in VI the husband's cynicism verges upon something like Othello's sadistic despair: "O bitter barren woman! what's the name? / The name, the name, the new name thou hast won?" This is the language of the sexual Egoist, whose view of woman is distorted by his projected faithlessness. In *A Spanish Ballad*, for example, we see an adulterous nobleman slaying his wife who, having taken a lover in compensation for her husband's neglect, is accused of being a whore:

Thundered then her lord of thunders;  
Burst the door, and, flashing sword,  
Loud disgorged the woman's title:  
Condemnation in one word. (p. 274)

But an indication of the complexity of *Modern Love* is found in the fact that the husband here turns upon his own Egoism: "Behold me striking the world's coward stroke!"

In sections VIII, XIX, and XXXV the state of disillusionment is

imaged in terms of blood and wounds. In XI the husband directs his wife's eyes to the West:

There wilt thou see  
An amber cradle near the sun's decline:  
Within it, featured even in death divine,  
Is lying a dead infant, *slain* by thee.

In XXVI distrust is an arrow which binds the eagle of love (cf. the falcon) to the ground with a harsh chain whose links are forged from the drops of his own red blood. And in XXXVI the husband, in a misogynist mood, sees himself as "probed" by women for tears.

Returning for the moment to the falcon-bat image already cited from the concluding section, I would like to direct attention to its "snare" element. Caught in this snare, the falcon of idealized love becomes somehow degraded—instead of soaring and swooping sunward it is condemned to "flit" like a bat. The bat, like the raven and the vulture, is an infernal image, a bird of ill omen. Sentimentalism, cynicism, and sensualism have become extraordinarily entangled in this complex image, and we must now chart its relationships.

We have seen that cynicism is imaged as a murderer bringing about the death of love, and here we see the bat, a death-bird, in a similar connection—and that which transforms the falcon to a bat is the snare. In the sense of trap or cage, the snare functions as a vehicle of sensualism: the idealist tries to etherealize his love by divorcing passion from devotion, but the ugly monster will not down and the noise of his rattling the bars of his prison permeates the poem. Along with this symbolism occurs similar imagery of the fall, pit, or underworld whence issue the snarling beasts of rebellious desire. In section II, for example, the wife's apparent infidelity "seemed to crown / The pit of infamy." And in IV "self-caged Passion" watches Philosophy "with a wondering hate . . . from its prison-bars." His wife, in the next, ironically treats him "as something that is *tame*, / And but at other provocation *bites*."

More involved is the situation in VII, where the husband's ambivalence is sharply drawn. The wife is pictured as she leaves her dressing-room: "Like one prepared to scale an *upper* sphere: / —By stirring up a *lower*, much I fear!" He courts the causes of his fear, dwelling with masochistic pleasure upon her sensual beauty, until he sees "with eyes of other men; / While deeper knowledge crouches in its *den*." In IX the animal imagery emerges explicitly:

He felt the *wild beast* in him betweenwhiles  
So masterfully rude . . .  
Had he not *teeth* to rend, and *hunger* too?

The truly sensual nature of the sentimentalist receives similar symbolic expression in *Youth in Memory*, where the plight of Age yearning for Youth's physical fulfillment is called "cravings for an *eagle's* flight, / To top white peaks." And the poet claims, "By what they

crave are they betrayed"—which brings to mind two passages from *Modern Love*: "We are *betrayed* by what is false within" (XLIII), and "Their hearts held *cravings* for the buried day" (L). Continuing with the same passage, we read:

And *cavernous* is that young dragon's *jaw*,  
Crimson for all [that he] the fiery reptile saw  
In *time now coveted*, for *teeth* to flay,  
Once more *consume*, were Life recurrent May.  
(p. 405)

Notice here the beast-cave-sentimentalist-sensualist cluster. What the idealist asks is that Earth's wheels should pause so that he may love and she be fair forever. This wish—because it cannot in the nature of things be granted—turns him into a dragon, Meredith's central symbol for the Egoist, and the daytime Jekyll becomes the night-prowling Hyde.

In XXII the husband, trying to infer from his wife's nervous manner what is going on in her mind, gets "a glimpse of *hell* in this mild guess." Nothing happens, and they are still "League-sundered by the silent *gulf* between." In the next section his lower impulses renew their insistent intensity when he and his wife are forced to sleep in the same room at a friend's house during the Christmas holidays:

The great carouse  
Knocks hard upon the midnight's hollow door,  
But when I knock at hers, I see the *pit*.

And he calls upon the "foul demons" that have tortured him now to "enchain" him. A close parallel to the falcon-snare-bat metaphor occurs in XXVI where the eagle of love "in high skies, / Has earth beneath his wings":

In vain they weave  
The fatal *web below* while far he flies.  
But when the arrow strikes him, there's a change.

Perhaps idealized love can sustain itself above the sexual level only as long as the arrow of distrust is not let fly. In the following section the husband decides to let loose and have his fling: Shall it be a blonde or a brunette? "No matter, so I taste forgetfulness. / And if the devil *snare* me, body and mind"—well, then, no matter! And he addresses his mistress: "Shouldst thou wake / The passion of a *demon*, be not afraid." And in the next section: "I feel the promptings of *Satanic power*."

Cynic and sensualist meet in XXX, where the husband, lecturing upon the brevity of love, concludes with the live-but-in-the-day moral—the creed, he says, of "scientific *animals*." The import of "scientific" in this context may perhaps be inferred from a similar usage in *Foresight and Patience*, where Foresight accuses the Nineteenth Century of ignoring both her and her sister: "Its learning is through *Science* to despair" (p. 416). In XXXII he plunges into a liaison with his

blonde Lady; but somehow, in spite of a fitful sense of relief, he cannot make a go of it:

One restless corner of my heart or head,  
That holds a dying something never dead,  
Still frets, though Nature giveth all she can.

"'Twere an effort for Nature both ways," claimed the poet in *By the Rosanna* a year before,

and which  
The mightier I can't aver:  
If we screw ourselves up to a certain pitch,  
She meets us—that I know of her. (p. 111)

What is lacking, of course, is the ideal of romantic love. Nature provides her earthly clues, but if we cannot "read" them—that is, catch their symbolic import—we are left merely with her sensuous surface. It is this fusion of internal and external, of the ideal and the real, which the husband cannot effect. Similar imagery appears in a lyric entitled *I Chafe at Darkness*:

But in me something clipped of wing  
Within its ring  
Frets; for I have lost what made  
The dawn-breeze magic, and the twilight beam  
A hand with tidings o'er the glade  
Waving seem. (p. 181)

We note here a link between the animal-cage and the bird-snare-ring imagery previously detailed. Dusk and dawn, the two twilights, are the central symbols in Meredith for death and rebirth, and this poem—written shortly after *Modern Love*—complains of the persistence of this loss of imaginative integration which *Modern Love* records.

Section XXXVIII protests against this split when the husband appeals to his mistress for love and devotion as well as sex and passion: blood needs spirit or we revert to "the hogs" shaming "the devils." Again, in XL the relic of his desire for his wife still interferes with this liaison: "The dread that my old love may be alive / Has seized my nursling new love by the throat." And in XLVIII we are back again to the bird-mesh image: "Jealous devotion bade her break the mesh, / That I might seek that other like a bird." A symbolic reversal which reveals its irony by its outcome: "break the mesh" means suicide, the only way out for tortured passion. And, finally, we may note that *The Promise in Disturbance*, the sonnet-prelude which Meredith prefixed to the series many years later, has as one of its central metaphors the image of Lucifer's fall from heaven.

#### IV

That such an ambivalence is bound to generate a complex image of woman is a psychological truism; our wishes color what we see in such a way that the objects of perception often seem to mirror our

own internal states. Thus the husband of the poem sees in his wife a projection of his own unreconciled impulses: "Devilish malignant witch! and oh, young beam / Of heaven's circle-glory!" he cries in section IX. The positive side of this metaphor refers to the rising sun, and in itself points back to the imagery of idealized love which we have already examined. The psychic movement behind these lines springs from the fact that the fascination exercised by the image of woman as the cherisher-comforter serves to increase the terror of its polar-aspect as the enslaver-betrayer.<sup>6</sup> That is, it is only because he desires her so intensely that she can appear in so deadly a light.

Lack of integration, then, is at the core of this ambiguous image. Meredith wrote much in later years about this particular problem, and he came eventually to the conclusion that an excessive striving after purity is at bottom motivated by lust. That man who expects a super-human sexlessness from his wife, seeking to divorce passion from devotion, is the one who finds himself driven to the brothel; the stargazer falls in the ditch. Thus, according to the mature Meredith, the images of both Artemis and Aphrodite contain the seeds of their own destruction when either is worshiped to the exclusion of the other:

Not far those two great Powers of Nature speed  
Disciple steps on earth when sole they lead;  
Nor either points for us the way of flame.  
From him [man] predestined mightier it came;  
*His task to hold them both in breast, and yield*  
Their dues to each, and of their war be field.  
(*Test of Manhood*, pp. 540-41)

Woman, the poet came to see, is capable of good and bad, sharing in kind and degree the universal human lot with man; and if she becomes terrible to him, it is because he has egoistically demanded the impossible of her and the Nature within her:

She is great Nature's ever intimate  
In breast, and doth as ready handmaid wait,  
Until, *perverted by her senseless male*,  
She plays the winding *snake*, the shrinking snail,  
The flying deer, all tricks of evil fame.  
Elusive to allure, since he grew tame.  
(*With the Persuader*, p. 538)

So we see, in *The Nuptials of Attila*, the warrior-chorus urge the chief not to marry but rather to treat women as lawful prey: "Eagle [Attila], *snakes* these women are; / Take them on the wing!" (p. 295). But in *A Ballad of Fair Ladies in Revolt* the crusading women urge their male companions to surrender their traditional image of woman as plaster saint in favor of a more realistic one: "you are free / To win brave mates; you lose but marionettes" (p. 251).

The image of the woman-betrayer, as we might expect, is the one

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Maud Bodkin, *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* (London, New York, and Toronto, 1934 [1948]), p. 173 and Chap. IV entire.

which dominates *Modern Love*. The snake in particular is frequently associated with the wife. In the first section, for example, her sobs are "little gaping *snakes*" to the listening husband. In VII his projected lust sees a "gold-eyed *serpent* dwelling in rich hair," and in the next section she is a "poor twisting *worm*." In XXVI the eagle of love becomes transformed by the arrow of mistrust, and "A subtle *serpent* then has Love become." In XXXII the husband, after failing to find true solace with his mistress, cries, "Who seeks the *asp* / For *serpents'* bites?" A rather perceptible advance in the husband's insight appears, however, in XXXIII, where he comments upon Raphael's picture of the serene heavenly angel's effortless slaying of the prone Lucifer:

when men the Fiend do fight,  
They conquer not upon such easy terms.  
Half *serpent* in the struggle grow these *worms*.

These words were spoken during a conversation with his mistress upon the theme: "While mind is mastering clay, / Gross clay invades it"—"If the spy you play, / My wife, read this! Strange love-talk, is it not?" Back with the wife in XXXIV, their "eyes dart scrutinizing *snakes*." Finally, in XLIII the husband walks the seacoast ruminating upon the unblest kisses of the previous night while he listens to the ponderous breakers "dart their *hissing tongues* high up the sand."

A coördinate image and its associations form part of this serpent-woman linkage: "you that made Love bleed, / You must bear all the *venom* of his tooth!" (XXVI). Related in this cluster, then, are the frequent references to venom-bitter-drug-poison. Thus we read in the opening section of "the pale *drug* of silence" which Memory and Tears, comprising the giant heart of midnight, drink "and so beat / Sleep's heavy measure" in the marriage bed-tomb of the alienated couple. In the second section the wife's beauty had a "*bitter* taste," and the husband "sickened as at breath of *poison-flowers*." And in VI he exclaims, "O *bitter* barren woman!" In VIII he refers to his own "*bitter* wound," and in IX he drinks from her eyes "as from a *poison-cup*." His feverish search for peace, in XII, has momentary success if he "*drinks oblivion* of a day"; but this willful self-deception, he realizes, shortens the stature of his soul. In XIV he resolves to bear up under his "*bitter* ill" rather than lose his self-respect, and in XVI he remembers the haunting *salt* taste her tears had to his kiss when he tried to comfort her, after speaking of the inevitable death of love. She is not one to unpack her heart with words, however, and the husband fears she will take a more overt revenge:

She is not one  
Long to endure this torpidly, and shun  
The *drugs* that crowd about a woman's hand.  
(XXXV)

Exactly what is intended here is difficult to say, but one is tempted

to read this as an unconscious prefiguration of her actual suicide. We see in XLVIII that "the *fatal draught*" which killed her was the "pure daylight of honest speech" which they "drank" in a last desperate effort to clear things up. When the tale came round to his mistress, she quixotically (or spitefully?) left him so that he could "seek the other like a bird." In the next section she is dead: "*Lethe* had passed those lips."

## V

This tragic denouement is foreshadowed from the very beginning, however, by the pervasive death imagery which clouds the entire poem. In the first section the marriage bed is a "tomb," and in VI the midnight-tomb-sobs-pulse cluster recurs:

She has a *pulse*, and flow  
Of *tears*, the price of blood-drops, as I know,  
For whom the *midnight sobs* around Love's *ghost*,  
Since then I heard her, and so will *sob* on.

In III the wife is "a *phantom*-woman of the past." And we have already called attention to the "dead infant" in the sunset image of XI, the ghost-skeleton-corpse cluster in XVII, as well as the midnight-hollow-pit cluster in XXIII. Section XXIX, which contains the husband's agonized plea for the rebirth of love, is built upon such funereal images as mould-white-brow-grin-grave, and XXX tells of the rude awakening from the dream of an ideal love which ostensibly erased the "distant *shadow* of the *tomb*." In XXIX the moon, which had become silently musical in sympathy with the momentary fruition of his love for his mistress, becomes "a dancing *spectre*" when his wife and her lover appear on the scene. In XLI the clock tells of the "approaching *midnight*," striking despair into two hearts, and in XLIII the husband is pacing the beach watching the wind shoot "Its *skeleton shadow* on the broad-backed wave! / Here is a fitting spot to dig Love's *grave*." In XLVI a "*ghastly morning*" blanches the wife's cheek, and in XLIX she dies at midnight.

The shadow imagery noted in passing serves as an associational bridge to yet another aspect of the prefiguration of death. We saw in XXX how the "crowning sun" of romanticized love apparently obliterates the shadow of death, yet the fact is that the love in the poem is undergoing the process in reverse. The wife is "A star with *lurid* beams" in section II, crowning "The pit of infamy," and, in III, "a star whose light is *overcast*." The husband does reach, however, a more humane position in XX, where he discovers a memento of his own past sexual aberrations:

I have just found a wanton-scented tress  
In an old desk, dusty for lack of use.  
Of days and nights it is demonstrative,  
That, like some aged star, gleam *luridly*.



In the following section a friend who has just fallen in love comes to them for their blessing; they try to keep up the game, but the strain proves too much for the wife and she faints:

When she wakes  
She looks *the star that thro' the cedar shakes*:  
Her lost moist hand clings mortally to mine.

In the next she is "shadow-like" and "wavering pale," and in XXIV a "cruel lovely *pallor*" surrounds her footsteps. Sunset preceding a dinner party is a "*smoky torch-flame*" in XXXVII, while in XL selfishness is imaged as "*lightless seas*." The disastrous evening encounter in XLII gives rise to "Thoughts *black as death*" which break upon his consciousness "Like a *stirred pool in sunshine*." And, in XLIX he finds his wife "*shadow-like and dry*" just before her death.

## VI

Thus far, having revealed successive layers of increasingly more infernal imagery, this poem seems to represent Meredith's symbolic descent without much indication of an upward turn or rebirth. And for the greater part of *Modern Love* such an impression is correct. There are some "tragic hints," however, which appear at four separate points in the poem. In XII, for example, is a mention of "the fair life which in the distance lies / For all men, beckoning out from dim rich skies." And in XLVIII we find that all too frequently quoted cry: "More brain, O Lord, more brain! or we shall mar / Utterly this fair garden we might win." The third point is found in the concluding lines of the series:

In tragic hints here see what evermore  
Moves dark as yonder *midnight* ocean's force,  
Thundering like ramping hosts of warrior *horse*,  
To throw that *faint thin* line upon the shore!

A similar cluster of images occurs in *Youth in Memory*, a poem structured around the theme of acceptance: by facing and accepting their past as it is, old men can win their way through to a resolution of their imbalance (i.e., thirsting after physical fulfillment), imaged as the "clear hearing of the simple lute." They can salvage their past in memory only after having purged it of desire, and this "ditty" will restore them:

a ditty thin  
As note of hedgerow bird in ear of *eve*,  
Or *wave at ebb*, the shallow catching rays  
On a transparent sheet, where curves a glass  
To truer heavens than when the breaker *neighs*  
Loud at the plunge for bubbly wreck in roar.  
Solidity and bulk and martial brass,  
Once tyrants of the senses, *faintly score*  
A *mark* on pebbled sand or fluid slime,



While present in the spirit, vital there,  
 Are things that seemed the phantoms of their time;  
 Eternal as the recurrent cloud, as air  
 Imperative, refreshful as dawn-dew. (p. 407)

The crash and roar of the ramping waves of youthful experience upon the shore of the heart represent the suffering and turmoil of fighting one's way through Blood (the senses) to Brain and Spirit (which appeared as phantoms to youth). Out of this bubble and wreck emerges—after the "martial brass" of sensuous youth has ceased to blare—a transparent sheet left by the withdrawing wave (the ebbing of Time) which mirrors in its thin translucency the wisdom of harmony and integration:

[We] see in mould the rose unfold,  
 The soul through blood and tears.  
 (*Outer and Inner*, p. 341)

The music imagery (ditty vs. brass) here associated with the wave-horse-mark-on-shore cluster, serves as a bridge to the final point, which is found in the sonnet Meredith prefixed to the series some years later. Thematically entitled "The Promise in Disturbance," it condenses the import of the entire poem largely in terms of a central music metaphor. The love whose death *Modern Love* so minutely chronicles was once as music (harmony) aspiring to the throne of wisdom. "One false tone" (sentimentalism) was sounded, and the "golden harp" gave out "a jangled strain," which revolted from harmony as Lucifer revolted from God. "But listen in the thought" (the mind's ear), adds the poet, and you will hear the "Conception of a newly-added chord" in the spirit ("space beyond where ear has home").

A passage from *Martin's Puzzle* will help us out here. Martin, a humble but forthright cobbler, ponders in vain over the traditional religious explanation of Evil as a punishment for the wicked and a trial for the righteous. Poor Molly, he meditates, as sweet and charitable a lass as one might hope to see, has been crippled by a series of brutal and stupid accidents: is her suffering a "lesson" to her?—she had no need of it! But then:

Stop a moment: I seize an idea from the pit.  
 They tell us that *discord*, though discord alone,  
 Can be *harmony* when the notes properly fit:  
 Am I judging all things from a single *false tone*?  
 Is the Universe one immense Organ, that rolls  
 From devils to angels? I'm blind with the sight.  
 (p. 180)

Molly's suffering has its place in the total scheme of things; one must not look upon Evil alone, for Life and Death are as much a part of one transcendent whole as is our breathing in and out (p. 357), and Evil belongs in its context as companion to Good. In that context it is transmuted.

Thus we end at the beginning:

In labour of the trouble at its fount,  
Leads Life to an intelligible Lord  
The rebel *discords* up the sacred mount.  
(*Promise in Disturbance*, p. 133)

The experience of life and a maturing insight allowed Meredith to place the tragedy of his early manhood in its proper perspective as a purgative one, translating an infernal discord into a divine harmony:

I see no sin:  
The wrong is mixed. In tragic life, God wot,  
No villain need be! Passions spin the plot:  
We are betrayed by what is false within.  
(XLIII)

Thus a modern lover learns afresh the significance of that ancient wisdom of self-recognition and achieves thereby a truly tragic status: We must die to ourselves in order that we may live.

*University of Connecticut*

## LANGUAGE AND STRUCTURE IN POETIC DRAMA

By HERBERT BLAU

Language is the highest individuation of the drama. Plot is formal cause, the characters or agents are manifestations of that cause, and the words "are the 'green leaves' which we actually perceive; the product and the sign of the one 'life of the plant' which, by an imaginative effort, one may divine behind them all."<sup>1</sup> In poetry we are moved by the things the words stand for. The words are a means to an end, and in the drama that end is the imitation of an action, the representation of events organized by probability and necessity. Other poetic forms, such as the lyric, may appear to treat events, but "events in the sense in which we speak of events in a philosophical dialogue—they are only dialectically separable stages in the treatment of a problem, and are reducible to statements within the problem."<sup>2</sup> Character in the lyric is the formal cause of thought; character in the drama is the material cause of plot. The lyric represents a quality, a choice; the drama, as Aristotle states it, "a certain kind of activity," which is "the end for which we live."<sup>3</sup> In the lyric, the words discover this choice, revealing its motive and making it apprehensible; in the drama, it is by means of words that the activity of conscious agents is informed and evaluated. Drama begins in instinct; language makes it civilized.

When the language of a play keeps its proper station, it too becomes a kind of action. This is perhaps what R. P. Blackmur means when he speaks of language as gesture.<sup>4</sup> In *King Lear*, when Edgar as Mad Tom meets his blinded father and momentarily debates with himself whether to continue his disguise, there is a line that is true to character, situation, and to the essential analogue of the play, that is so vivid as to be a stage direction. Deciding to continue his pretense, Edgar says to Gloucester: "Bless thy sweet eyes, they bleed." One senses the proper emotion and the proper movement: Edgar's heart and hand both go out to the tormented man—the line is one in which the words are gestures, or, as Kenneth Burke would term them, symbolic action. The word "bless" suggests a tentative reaching out for benediction and soothing; the word "bleed," which alliterates, negates the motion through its implication of sticky horror.

Although there is nothing extraordinary about it when considered

<sup>1</sup> Francis Fergusson, *Idea of a Theater* (Princeton, 1949), p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Elder Olson, "Prolegomena to a Poetics of the Lyric," *Permanence of Yeats*, ed. James Hall and Martin Steinmann (New York, 1950), pp. 299-300.

<sup>3</sup> *Poetics* VI.1450<sup>a</sup> 17-18.

<sup>4</sup> *Language as Gesture* (New York, 1952), p. 6.

out of context—for one thing, the words are all monosyllabic—the language of the line certainly deserves the name of poetry. It communicates a deep and complicated emotion, and it involves an incongruity true enough to the assumed eccentricity of the speaker. Still there has been a good deal of talk in our day, led by T. S. Eliot, about the need for a new poetic language—and a new verse—which the poet must create if he is to express properly the multifarious qualities of our age. What precisely does this mean, and how does the poet go about creating his own language? Eliot himself has described the process as that of dislocating current language into meaning.<sup>5</sup> But this is vague and, as it has become canonical in modern poetry and criticism, it has led to ambiguity and difficulty for their own sakes.

The process of creation of a new language, however, is illustrated in the line from *Lear* and takes place in fact whenever a poem is written, but in this way: first of all, a word in a poetic line is no better than its neighbors permit it to be; that is, context modifies denotation and changes, however slightly, the total signification of any given word. Secondly, since metrical language expresses emotion, and since meter is capable of qualifying and refining meaning, being itself imitative and provocative, then the value of any word in a rhythmical sequence differs from the value of that same word in another context. Thus the poet is actually creating a unique language for each poem, though, as Yvor Winters warns, "he is far from being a wholly free agent in creating. . . . He is seeking to state a true moral judgment; he is endeavoring to bring each word as close to a true judgment as possible; and he has it in his power to modify the values of words within certain limits."<sup>6</sup> In the drama, the context is provided and the limits are set by the action.

The function of meter, therefore, as of every other aspect of language, is not simply musical; it has moral bearing. And talk about creating a new language for poetry has no bearing whatever unless it provides for the judicial properties of meter. It seems inconceivable, moreover, that the number of permutations and combinations possible to the English language, with hundreds of thousands of words at its disposal, in addition to a variety of meters, has been exhausted, although it should be remembered that permutations and combinations take place according to a principle of determination *prior* to language and before the words establish themselves in context—the words do not work among themselves. Given the context, the words should be stabilized and precise, not ambiguous. Our response to the words in context is determined not by the words themselves but by our understanding of the object, the action, which motivates their arrangement and which they help to judge.

In the drama the effects to be obtained by meter will probably be more obvious than those in the closely articulated, compressed form

<sup>5</sup> "The Metaphysical Poets," *Selected Essays* (London, 1951), p. 289.

<sup>6</sup> *In Defense of Reason* (New York, 1947), p. 550.

of the lyric. Violence of metrical effect such as that achieved in the last lines of Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* would be too much for the lyric poem to withstand. Because the drama, however, cultivates large emotions, it can contain metrical aberrations of this sort, and when they occur they gain in power as a result of the action on which they depend and on which they reflect. The drama compensates in intensity for what it lacks in finesse.

Intensity of statement is not, certainly, desirable for its own sake; and within particular arbitrary conventions of the drama, such as the soliloquy and the chorus, it is possible to achieve very subtle appraisals of feeling. Nevertheless, to some extent unformalized feeling is inevitable. The lyric poem is a more univocal form than the drama; its unity at its best is concentrated and introverted, a unity of thought and feeling inextricable, of thought continuously motivating feeling. But the form of the drama is partially discontinuous; feeling is never fully explained at any given moment in the evolution of the whole, although it is the business of the dramatist to prevent discontinuity from becoming dominant and destroying probability and necessity.

The ability to make use of the unavoidable measure of dislocation is a distinction of the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists. Webster's *The White Devil*, for example, establishes immediacy in its opening line without permitting the energy released to usurp the rest of the play. "Banisht!"—the spectator is instantly drawn into the action. Emotion is in excess of perceptible motivation, but the remainder of the scene is devoted to explaining the discrepancy. The scene provides, then, a rational basis for much of what follows, though not all, because the subplots and other strains of action approximate the dramatic form to a musical composition in which various themes, minor and major, are introduced at different points in the temporal sequence, alternating and qualifying the mood of the whole, until all of the themes are merged and resolved in the finale—the whole arrangement of events having, nevertheless, the effect of an unalterable and necessary relationship, the themes reflecting back and forth upon each other.

In the sense that I have just described it, all good form is organic. The desire for organic form becomes dangerous, however, when states of formlessness are treated and the artist capitulates to his subject and permits it to take over his medium, particularly his language, as in Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the plays of the German Expressionists, and a good deal of poetry and drama in the Symbolist tradition. The writer may, on the other hand, lay claim to an initial intensity of feeling for which there is no apparent justification; in doing so, he is establishing what Winters calls a convention.<sup>7</sup> The

<sup>7</sup> "In so far as any passage is purely conventional, that is, conventional as distinct from perceptual, it does not represent a perception of its own content, the feeling it assumes is not justified within the passage in question. When I speak of *conventional language*, I shall mean language in which the perceptual content is slight or negligible." *Ibid.*, p. 81.

efficacy of that convention depends upon the precision with which it is defined, for it is relative to the initial assumption of feeling that variations of feeling are determined. In *The White Devil*, the rest of the opening scene gives perceptual value to the opening statement and defines the convention of the play, which is a powerful one, since the play examines the most abandoned forms of disillusionment.

To see this we might compare it with *Hamlet*, which also studies disillusionment. Whereas in *Hamlet* the characters resist destruction, and whereas the protagonist himself fears extinction and the loss of reputation ("O God! Horatio, what a wounded name"), in *The White Devil* the characters welcome oblivion as a haven, a rest. They are beyond the attitude of "To be or not to be"—the disgust they feel, the horror at misused and pandered glory, makes "not to be" desirable. The beautiful last scene of the play expresses this feeling in the final speeches of Vittoria, Flamineo, and Lodovico.

Asked by Lodovico before he is killed, "What dost thinke on?" Flamineo replies:

Nothing; of nothing: leave thy idle questions,  
I am ith way to study a long silence,  
To prate were idle, I remember nothing.  
Thers nothing of so infinit vexation  
As mans owne thoughts. (V.vi)

Reason itself, then, leads to infinite torment. For Hamlet, who learned this too, the torment must be worth it. For Flamineo, it is nothing worth. As for Vittoria, she asserts her dignity to the last, refusing to be killed after her servant Zanche:

I will be waited on in death; my servant  
Shall never go before me. . . .  
Yes I shall wellcome death  
As Princes doe some great Embassadors;  
He meete thy weapon halfe way.

And Lodovico, knowing he is to be tortured, nevertheless insists:

I do glory yet,  
That I can call this act mine owne: For my part,  
The racke, the gallowes, and the torturing wheele  
Shall bee but sound sleepes to me, here's my rest—  
"I limb'd this night-peece and it was my best."

Spiritual acedia is the motivating and centripetal principle of the play. "The rest is silence" of *Hamlet* is altered to "The silence is rest." The play itself is a "night-peece."

Its language, accordingly, has a heavy burden of feeling to justify; the definition and control of its convention is a formidable task. That this is accomplished is in large measure due to the resources made available to the dramatist through his "use" of poetry, which was motivated in the first place by the emotional convention, which was in turn motivated by the dramatist's rational conception of his action.

It is extremely doubtful that the sustained and variegated horror of *The White Devil* could have been conveyed in "ordinary" prose. Webster had a sense of a vaster world than that endowed to the Renaissance by the Middle Ages. But he does not merely express fright and incertitude; he comprehends them. Faced with a similar terror at immensity, our modern prose drama has forfeited the stylistic means of adjusting to it, and by adjusting, transcending.

Poetry in the drama must not, as Eliot suggests, be saved for special moments;<sup>8</sup> it must continually function in structure rather than flare forth at points of intensity. A play is either poetic or it is not poetic: it takes as much poetry to define a moment of prosaic boredom as one of exquisite rapture. The failure to refer poetic language to action, however, reduces its possibilities within the dramatic form. Unassimilated by plot, language becomes as excessive or unmotivated. In *Tamburlaine*, for example, the diction and imagery are organized by the dominant passion of the central character: his thirst for power, the fruition of an earthly crown. Marlowe attempts to universalize Tamburlaine's aspirations by magnifying them. As a result, the hero's excessive cruelty is not examined and judged; it is merely projected. The emotions are developed by repeating them in various images, each one larger than the one before, leading inevitably to improbable events and to bombast and rant, and approaching at its limit the character of the Heroic Drama of the next century.<sup>9</sup>

There are times in *Tamburlaine*, it should be said, when passionate expression is assimilated, as in the famous speeches "What is beauty, saith my sufferings, then?" and "The thirst of reign and sweetness of a crown." And in *Dr. Faustus*, where character exists more fully on the level of plot, Marlowe's poetic utterance is more explicitly motivated and serves to represent and explain changes in Faustus' moral nature. Even the famous lyrical description of Helen, ecstatic in its feeling, is incorporated in structure. For Helen is the incarnation of the greatest possible earthly beauty attracting the soul of Faustus from religious obedience. Marlowe develops an impression of her—no more than an impression, for no more is realizable—by a series of hyperbolic analogies. Yet without describing Helen directly, he succeeds in projecting the very powerful emotions felt by Faustus, emotions powerful enough to overcome the formal discipline of a lesser poet: "Her lips suck forth my soul: see where it flies! / Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again" (V.i).

From this point on, Faustus is impotent in his struggle and simply rhapsodizes over Helen's incredible beauty. The development is nonetheless dramatic, as it indicates an advanced stage of Faustus' degradation, a stage in which he is so engulfed in physical beauty as to be impervious to the petitions of the Old Man, who proffers grace to him. The hyperbole is further justified by Faustus' excessive

<sup>8</sup> *Poetry and Drama* (Cambridge, Mass., 1951), p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Moody E. Prior, *Language of Tragedy* (New York, 1947), p. 45.



sensuality and lack of moral control. Were the passage to be considered out of context, as a lyric, it would suffer from the most obvious vices of feeling; it is a question whether such feeling could be contained and motivated in the form of a lyric poem. But considered in respect to Faustus' hardening in sin, the rhapsody is limited by form and helps to realize it. It has value as perception.

We can see here too that, however it is "used," poetry is not simply imposed on drama or mechanically attached to increase capacity. To speak of poetry *in* the drama is begging the question, because what we perceive as being poetic is the linguistic manifestation of the urgency and profundity of dramatic action. Poetry does not contribute generality and magnitude to the drama; generality and magnitude are present in the conception of fundamental human action out of which the poetry grows.

Think, for example, of the animal imagery in *Hamlet*. Claudius is on various occasions a satyr, a paddock, a bat, a gib, an adulterate beast; Polonius is a capital calf, a rat, mere guts; and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two adders fanged. The development of such imagery defines the antithesis between what Hamlet desires for himself and for man in general—the rational and god-like; and what, to him, men actually have become—degraded beasts. Hamlet does not exclude himself from this judgment; he aspires to be god-like in reason but perceives and admits his own delinquency in the exercise of that faculty. His disgust is personal and public. It is his distinction that he can apprehend, although he is powerless to stop, the dissolution of virtue that everyone else either ignores or is too imperceptive to sense.

In structure, *Hamlet* is ramified by a complex set of analogies, each throwing light on the other and affording numerous perspectives for viewing the major action. Analogizing, however, has its dangers, and the thing to ask about Hamlet is not, as Eliot asks, whether Shakespeare provided the objective equivalent of the feelings developed—there is more than a mere equivalent—but rather, as Fergusson suggests, whether he did not offer us a bewildering complexity of motives for these feelings—too many reasons, in short, not too few:

The besetting sin of the Renaissance, as Pico foresaw, was an overindulgence in the imagination as it discerns analogies of every kind. M. Gilson has explained how even Bonaventura could abuse his gift for analogizing, losing at times the distinction between real analogy and the superficial correspondences which his faith led him to see.<sup>10</sup>

Language in Shakespeare's best plays is dynamic, paralleling the tragic rhythm of action, tracing moral change. Notice the difference in Lear's diction when, having gained humility through suffering, having realized that he is as much sinning as sinned against, he no longer speaks the proud and grandiloquent language of his power nor that of the demented clamor of his dispossession. With Cordelia beside

<sup>10</sup> Fergusson, *Idea of a Theater*, p. 141.



him, unsure of his own condition, he speaks plainly and directly, in the same unpretentious language which Cordelia herself used when she refused to flatter him :

Pray, do not mock me :  
I am a very foolish fond old man,  
Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less ;  
And, to deal plainly,  
I fear I am not in my perfect mind. (IV.vii.59-63)

Here, where self-knowledge and passivity control the poetry, structure is in no danger. But when Lear is howling on the heath, at the brim of madness, the task is more difficult. Yet Shakespeare manages, without abandoning his form, without disrupting irremediably either syntax or meaning—the method of much modern poetry—to convey the full intensity of the old man's delirium. The poetry projects but transfigures chaos ; it is operating as structure.

Take another illustration from *Macbeth*, the laconic greeting that Macbeth gives to Macduff and Lennox when they arrive at the castle, right after the porter sequence. This is the stunned reverberation of fright and disgust :

*Lennox.* Good morrow, noble sir.  
*Macbeth.* Good morrow, both.  
*Macduff.* Is the king stirring, worthy thane?  
*Macbeth.* Not yet.  
*Macduff.* He did command me to call timely on him :  
I have almost slipp'd the hour.  
*Macbeth.* I'll bring you to him.  
*Macduff.* I know this is a joyful trouble to you ;  
But yet 'tis one.  
*Macbeth.* The labour we delight in physics pain.  
This is the door.  
*Macduff.* I'll make so bold to call,  
For 'tis my limited service. [Exit.]  
*Lennox.* Goes the king hence to-day?  
*Macbeth.* He does : he did appoint so.  
*Lennox.* The night has been unruly : where we lay,  
Our chimneys were blown down ; and, as they say,  
Lamentings heard i' the air ; strange screams of death,  
And prophesying with accents terrible  
Of dire combustion and confus'd events  
New hatch'd to the woeful time. The obscure bird  
Clamour'd the livelong night : some say the earth  
Was feverous and did shake.  
*Macbeth.* 'Twas a rough night.  
(II.ii.47-66)

Macbeth's curt replies embarrass the others, until Lennox, left alone with him, makes his uncomfortable observation on the weird disorders of nature that generally accompany and foreshadow disaster in a Shakespearean tragedy—the author's sense of correspondences skillfully compounds the horror. Duncan's death is indeed, as Macbeth says later in the ornate, stilted, dissimulating speech in which he

admits he has killed the guards, "a breach in nature." But the word "nature" is rich with irony, for Macbeth's inordinate desires have corrupted his soul. The scope of the action is thus extended dramatically in the speech of Lennox; and the passage is riddled with minor ironies, all relative to the antecedent action. In Macbeth's cryptic remarks, we have the poetry of inarticulateness, not the expressive silence of naturalistic drama.

The functioning of language in Elizabethan drama is, of course, too complex a subject to consider fully; but it would be worthwhile, in conclusion, to examine two marked characteristics in respect to what has been said so far: the alternation of mood, and the variation from verse to prose. In the Elizabethan drama, whenever there is an alternation of mood, it is, as Eliot somewhere suggests, generally in the direction of humor, as in the scene in *Julius Caesar* where Casca recounts to Cassius and Brutus the refusal of Caesar to accept the crown thrice offered to him by Antony. The tone of this scene, with its ominous banter, is not entirely different from the one preceding it, in which Cassius sounds out Brutus' attitude toward Caesar. Yet the Casca scene is in prose and the latter in verse—the variation serving to label not only the change in tone, but the character of Casca and, even more important, the reduction in motive, the relaxed intensity of situation. In the first scene, Cassius had to speak carefully: consequently the formalization of his expression. With Casca—who speaks elsewhere in verse—the tone is that of the informal, half-mocking conversation of old friends, rhythmic nonetheless for its prose, because the tension is dormant, underlying the immediate situation and liable to manifest itself again in verse, which it does in the next exchange between Brutus and Cassius on Casca's exit.

The Casca scene is, then, a rhythmic and structural node in the Brutus-Cassius relationship. The language of the play is always in motion; the change from verse to prose has meaning beyond characterization. Poetry, in becoming character, becomes action—becomes in fact an appraisal of the very action it identifies.

*San Francisco State College*

## AN EXPLICATION OF LOVELACE'S "THE GRASSE-HOPPER"

By DON CAMERON ALLEN

Sometime after the collapse of the royal cause and the execution of King Charles, perhaps after his own imprisonment and impoverishment, Richard Lovelace wrote his ode on the grasshopper and dedicated it to his fellow poet and royalist, Charles Cotton. Though the poem is often regarded as a simple cavalier lyric, it is really a splendid reticulation of memories and meanings that defy the naked understanding, no matter how sensitive it is. Lovelace is no more a maker of poetic plain song than is John Donne, for he, too, was the possessor of a strong wit filed to a sharp edge by the rasping times through which he lived. The edge is no brittle one, easy for a modern to shatter, for the metal of which it was made was tempered by a broad intuition of the poetic tradition. To demonstrate this generalization, I shall attempt to examine the "Grasse-hopper" in terms of a double exegesis that encloses not only the moment of its composition but the anterior history of the symbolic creature that is the pre-text of the poem.

At first reading, the poem separates rather naturally into two parts. Stanzas I-V set a familiar measure by recalling in a submerged personified fashion the literary ancestry of the insect that is surfacely the subject of this area of the poem. We recognize the sub-tune at once; it is Anacreon, whose poem had been earlier translated by Belleau and by Cowley. But this is no forthright rendering—a more complicated chorus of echoes. With the sixth stanza the intellectual rhythm begins to alter, and not only is Horace heard, but there is an immediate contrast between the past and the present, between the symbolic history of the grasshopper and the current history of the poet and his friend. The moral medievalism that swells toward the surface in Stanzas IV and V is rejected and, after a series of variations, is replaced by a Horatian act of will. In this artistic voluntary there are, I think, Christian as well as pagan elements; the remedy for the present is provided by Horatian doctrine, but the conviction of an infinite present, once satisfaction is procured, is completely Christian. But this rough summation must be rubricated in terms of Lovelace's gift from his predecessors. To the estimation of that gift, I now turn.

Almost at the beginning of poetic transformations, Anacreon of Teos heard the grasshopper in the fields of summer and made him into song. He took delight in the insect because it could be as drunk as a happy king on dew, because it owned all that it saw about it and took tribute of the seasons. It is beloved of the muses for its singing and

blessed by Phoebus, and if this is not merit enough, says the commending poet, the unsuffering song-lover is as ethereal as a god.

ἀπαθής, ἀναιμόσαρκε  
σχεδὸν εἰ θεοῖς ὅμοιος.<sup>1</sup>

This is what Anacreon wrote in substance, and I may now recite against it the proper stanzas of Lovelace's version.

Oh thou that swing'st upon the waving haire  
Of some well-filled Oaten Beard,  
Drunke ev'ry night with a Delicious teare  
Dropt thee from Heav'n, where now th' art reard.

The Joyes of Earth and Ayre are thine intire,  
That with thy feet and wings dost hop and flye;  
And when thy Poppy workes thou dost retire  
To thy Carv'd Acron-bed to lye.

Up with the Day, the Sun thou welcomst then,  
Sportst in the guilt-plats of his Beames,  
And all these merry dayes mak'st merry men,  
Thy selfe, and Melancholy streames.<sup>2</sup>

There is obviously more here than a pleasant rewarming of Anacreon's poem, and we do well to turn the poetic clock backwards for a better understanding. Hesiod had also known the "blue-winged" grasshopper that perched on green boughs, singing in the heat of the dog-days when beards grew on the oats,<sup>3</sup> that made sonorous odes in the luxuriant months when goats were fattest, wine best, women amorous, and men languid.<sup>4</sup> But it is Homer who gives us a symbolic prejudice, when he compares the song of the grasshopper to the "lily-like voices" of the old Trojan aristocrats, who chattered on the wall as Queen Helen walked the wide-way to the Skaian Gate.<sup>5</sup> From texts of this nature, the champions of Charles might imagine that the grasshopper, the βασιλεύς of Anacreon, had aristocratic pretensions; if they did not heed the whisper of these texts, there were other Greeks who stated the fact clearly. "It is only recently," Thucydides writes of the Athenians, "that their rich old men left off . . . fastening their hair with a tie of golden grasshoppers."<sup>6</sup> The grasshopper, Suidas

<sup>1</sup> *Carmina Anacreontea*, ed. Preisendanz (Leipzig, 1912), p. 28. The Greeks do not seem to have distinguished carefully between the various singing insects; it is not always clear what creature is meant when they use τέττιξ, καλαμαία, μάντις, and ἀκρίς. The translators have done little better. Anacreon's poem is probably about the cicada, but it has usually been translated as the grasshopper. A similar confusion exists in the Latin use of *grillus* and *cicada*.

<sup>2</sup> I use the Oxford text (1930) of C. H. Wilkinson. The two last lines of the third stanza may be paraphrased as "days make men merry, yourself merry, and melancholy streams away" or "days make melancholy streams (rivers) also merry." I incline to the first reading.

<sup>3</sup> *Αἶσπις*, ed. Flach (Leipzig, 1878), pp. 393-400.

<sup>4</sup> *Θεογ.*, *ibid.*, pp. 581-86.

<sup>5</sup> *Iliad*, III.151-53.

<sup>6</sup> *History*, I.6.

states, was the emblem of the nobles of Athens because not only was the insect a musician but, as Erechtheus, founder of the city, born of the earth.<sup>7</sup> So the insect that sang throughout the prosperous season of warmth and light is given the colors of wisdom, the wisdom possessed among the Greeks by the aristocrats of Athens.

If for the Greeks the grasshopper is a symbol of the gay months and their magic, if he is also the representative in nature of the *ἀπιστοί*, he is most triumphantly the analogue of the poet-singer, whose verses he so delicately graced throughout antiquity.<sup>8</sup> For this reason Meleager is securely in the tradition when he invokes the grasshopper as "the muse of the cornlands" (*ἀρουραῖν Μοῦσα*), the song-writer of the dryads, and the challenger in verse and voice of the great Pan.<sup>9</sup> In one ancient myth, a grasshopper, by alighting on the peg from which the lyre string had broken, helped Eunomos of Locris win the prize at the Pythian Games by supplying him with the wanting notes.<sup>10</sup> To fortify and enhance this legend may be added another related, and perhaps invented, by Plato.

On one occasion, when Socrates and Phaedrus were talking, the former heard the grasshoppers singing and said that these insects received gifts from the gods, which, in turn, they imparted to men. When the exquisite Phaedrus inquired about the nature of these gifts, Socrates related the following myth.

A lover of the muses should surely not be ignorant of this. It is said that once these grasshoppers were a race of men that lived before the muses existed.

<sup>7</sup> *Historica* (Basel, 1564), col. 959. The scholiasts on Aristophanes' *Clouds* (III.3) give the same first reason but alter the second to "consecrata fuerunt Apollini, is autem Deus Urbi fit Patrius." Clement Alexandrinus mentions the same tradition: *Paedagogus*, PG, VIII.523. See also Aelian, IV.22, and Aristophanes' *Knights* where *τεττιγοφόρος* is used as the equivalent of wise old aristocrat (1331). It may be an overreading, but it is possible that Lovelace could think of the "Oaten Beard" of Stanza I in the Latin form of "arista." There is, of course, no philological connection.

<sup>8</sup> He is everywhere part of the rural decoration; see Theocritus, XVI.94-96, or Virgil, *Bucolics*, II.12-13; *Georgics*, III.328; *Culex*, 151; *Copa*, 27-28. The *Greek Anthology*, ed. Waltz (Paris, 1928), is filled with poems to the grasshopper; see Antipater of Thessalonica, IX.92; Phaenrus, VII.197; Archias, VII.191; Aristodicus of Rhodes, VII.189; Leonidas, VII.190, 198; Mnascalos, VII.192, 194; Simias, VII.193; Pamphilos, VII.201.

<sup>9</sup> *Greek Anthology*, VII.195, 196. The latter poem was turned into Latin by Heinsius, *Poemata* (Leiden, 1613), p. 472. The insect is regularly associated with birds in antiquity; an unnamed poet of the *Anthology* calls it "the roadside night-ingle of the nymphs" (*τὴν Νυμφέων παροδίτῃν ἀρδόνῃ*), IX.373; similar metaphors come in IX.122 and the Appendix, III.225. This association of grasshopper and bird is standard in the Middle Ages; see Eugenius Vulgaris in *Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini* (Berlin, 1899), IV.430, or the *Carmina Burana*, ed. Hilka and Schumann (Heidelberg, 1930), 133.14-16.

<sup>10</sup> Strabo, *Geography*, VI.1.9. Paulus Silentiarius recounts this myth in an elegant poem; see *Greek Anthology*, VI.54. This grasshopper was probably the ancestor of the one that was summoned by St. Francis to sit in the palm of his hand and sing the praises of God. Obeying the saint, it burst into a bell-like song far sweeter than its accustomed music. J. E. Nierembergius, *Historiae naturae, libri IX* (Antwerp, 1635), p. 203.

When the muses were born and song appeared, they were so moved by pleasure that as they sang, they forgot to eat and death caught them unawares. They live now in the grasshoppers, having that boon from their birth until their death. When they die, they inform the muses in Heaven who worships them here below. Terpsichore, they tell of those who have honored her in the dance, and thus make them dearer to her; Erato, they tell of her lovers and to each sister they report according to her honorers. But to Calliope, the eldest, and to Urania, the second of the nine, they bear tidings of those who pass their lives in philosophic study and the observance of their especial music; for these are the muses, who having Heaven for their particular sphere and words both human and divine, speak most gladly.<sup>11</sup>

So with Plato, whose own musical voice was likened by Timon to the "lily-songs" of the Hecademian grasshoppers,<sup>12</sup> the insects become the apotheoses of human singers who have lost their lives through their love of art. "Dropt thee from Heav'n, where now th' art reard." The insect—for Plato's myth and Anacreon's poem contaminate each other—is now a poet, and the evidence of its transition, with a further qualification, is found in the writings of Flavius Philostratus.

Among the letters of the author of *Apollonius* and of the *Icones*, so popular in the Renaissance, is one recommending the poet Celsus to a wealthy patron. This poet, Philostratus writes, has "as the good grasshoppers (οἱ χρηστοὶ τέττιγες) devoted his life to song; you will see to it that he is fed on more substantial food than dew."<sup>13</sup> The metaphor makes the poet into a grasshopper, but in the *Apollonius* Philostratus associates the grasshopper with the plight of men who have lost out. The philosopher Demetrius, exiled to Dicaearchia by the Roman despot, cries out in envy of the singing grasshopper and says to Apollonius that they, at least, are never in danger of persecution and above human calumny, for they have been set aloft by the muses that they "might be the blissful poets of that felicity which is theirs."<sup>14</sup> The contrast made by Demetrius is strangely close to one of the major contentions of "The Grasse-hopper."

By following the road of antiquity—a road not unknown to men of the seventeenth century—we arrive at Lovelace's pre-text enriched with classical suggestiveness. We know, now, that the grasshopper was a singer beloved of the muses; that he had once been a human artist and long continued to accompany and instruct human artists; that he was a badge of royalty, an aristocrat, and a poet; and that he had an easy connection with men in political disfavor. The burden of this suggestiveness may explain why Cowley translated Anacreon's poem and why Lovelace sought to refabricate it into something reminiscent but almost totally new. When we turn to the first three stanzas of the poem, all that we have learned from the Greeks is born

<sup>11</sup> *Phaedrus*, 259. I cannot find this legend in any writer prior to Plato, and I have found it in none after him. Photius mentions it as if it were common knowledge (*Bibliotheca*, PG, CIII.1354), as it probably was to those who knew Plato.

<sup>12</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, III.7.

<sup>13</sup> *Works*, ed. Kayser (Leipzig, 1870), p. 364.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261.

anew. The grasshopper is once again drunk on dew, now a "Delicious teare"; he swings from the oaten beard on which Hesiod had placed him; but like the grasshoppers of Plato, he has been "reard" to Heaven. We see at once behind the literal front, for we know that the grasshopper is an aristocrat, a King. We are really not reading a poem about a grasshopper, but about a King and a cause that are dead on earth but living in Heaven.

Choosing what in many respects was an optimistic symbol, Lovelace has annotated it with melancholia. According to the bright Attic tradition, as represented by the poem of Meleager, the grasshopper's music was the anodyne of sorrow, and Lovelace recalls this in the latter lines of the third stanza. But the living grasshopper of the Greek solar months is made a poetic prelude to the inexperienced innocent, "poore verdant foole," who is in Heaven. In this interplay of life and death, tersely suggested by Stanzas IV and V, we pass from what is light and warm into the cold darkness of inescapable death and defeat.

But ah the Sickle! Golden Eares are Cropt;  
Ceres and Bacchus bid good night;  
Sharpe frosty fingers all your Flowr's have topt,  
And what sithes spar'd, Winds shave off quite.

Poore verdant foole! and now green Ice! thy Joys  
Large and as lasting, as thy Peirch of Grasse,  
Bid us lay in 'gainst Winter, Raine, and poize  
Their flouds, with an o'reflowing glasse.

The subdued warning note of the first stanza of the poem, which had been further muted by the two bright Anacreontic quatrains, is now made into a torrent of trumpets. Behind the allegory of nature and the classical figments, the emotional current of the decade in which the poem was written comes plain. The grasshopper King, who so tellingly loved the sun, has fallen under the sickle; the flowers of his realm are topped by the "sithes" or, spared by these, shaved by the cruel winds. The merryman, faced by winter, look to the lesson of the summer singer. At this point, too, the poet makes his own self-identifications, for all that antiquity had attributed to the grasshopper—the aristocrat, the poet-singer, the man in political ill-favor—suit him. It is a solemn emphasis, and with it Lovelace remembers the variant of the Aesopica that had charmed the Middle Ages.<sup>18</sup> He

<sup>18</sup> The fable of the industrious ant and the careless grasshopper was popularized in the Middle Ages by Alexander Neckham (*Novus Aesopus*, XXIX). It also appears in various French redactions; see J. Bastin, *Recueil General des Isopets* (Paris, 1929), and Marie de France, *Poesies*, ed. de Roquefort (Paris, 1832), II, 123-25. In antiquity, I have found only Seneca suggesting this legend (*Epistolae morales*, 87.19-20); the early fathers think of the grasshopper either in the decorative manner of the poets (Ambrose, *Hexameron*, PL, XIV.251-52) or commend it for some Christian quality (Gregory, *Oratio XXVII*, PG, XXXVI.59; Jerome, *Epistolae*, XXII.18). In the *Miracles de Nostre Dame*, ed. Paris and Robert (Paris, 1877), the grasshopper is made into a resurrection symbol (II.231).



leaves the Greek world of warmth and light to inhabit for a while the Gothic land of cold and sunlessness.

In the gathering shadows of the medieval world of death—St. Ambrose had taught the transitoriness of life by the biography of the grasshopper<sup>16</sup>—we hear for a moment an ancient funeral chant. The crops are harvested. Ceres and Bacchus have departed to a longer sleep than that of the sunlight grasshopper when its "Poppy workes." Winter has frozen even Fate. The Northwind strikes "his frost-stretch'd Wings." December comes in tears far different from those that "Dropt thee from Heav'n." Sullenly, the "darke Hagge" hangs about "light Casements." We are a long way from Anacreon's living summer. Nature is now sternly present, thinly veiling with her realities the parallel actualities of the poet's life. We leave the dark external world to enter the poet's heart. In this black moment of cold, the Christian tone begins, for Lovelace remembers the once bright celebration of the wintered year.

Dropping *December* shall come weeping in,  
Bewayle th' usurping of his Raigne;  
But when in show'rs of old Greeke we beginne,  
Shall crie, he hath his Crowne againe!

Pathos and hope, together with December memories of the Roman Saturnalia, are joined in this stanza; but to comprehend its tightly wound emotion, we must remember Prince Christmas, the *Rex Fabarum*, who wore his crown, as proudly as Charles had worn his, during the festivities of the long Christmas week.<sup>17</sup> But the royalty of Christmas, shared by all who kept the feast, had been despoiled as the royalists were despoiled, by the masters of the new state. For a number of years John Evelyn recorded a dismal acknowledgment of the fall of the Christmas king; one of them reads tersely: "Christmas-day, no sermon any where, no church being permitted to be open, so observed it at home."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Epistolae*, PL, XVI.1097.

<sup>17</sup> The career of such a prince, who had in his titles the distinction of "high Regent of the Hall" (probably Gloucester Hall, Lovelace's college) has come down to us in an eyewitness account; see G. Higgs, *An Account of the Christmas Prince, as it was exhibited in the University of Oxford in the year 1607* (London, 1816).

<sup>18</sup> See the Diary (De Beer edition) for December 25 in 1652, 1654, 1655. The parliamentary order of December 19, 1644, laid aside the observance of Christmas; see J. Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (London, 1722), V, 763. This order was preceded by doubts about its observance expressed in the ordinance of 1642 suppressing plays. On June 8, 1647, Parliament completely abolished the feast, together with those of the other principal holidays. "In Canterbury, on the 22nd of December following, the crier went round by direction of the Mayor, and proclaimed that Christmas Day and all other superstitious festivals be put down, and a market kept on that day." Rushworth, VI, 548. Evelyn tells us (December 25, 1657) of his arrest and interrogation when he attended a Christmas sermon in Exeter chapel. He was asked: "Why, contrarie to an Ordinance made that none should any longer observe the superstitious time of the *Nativity* (so esteem'd by them) I durst offend, & particularly be at *Common prayers*, which they told me was but the *Masse* in *English*, & particularly pray for *Charles stuard*, for which we had no Scripture."



Lovelace's solution, like Evelyn's, is based on privacy and withdrawal. The aristocratic poets may be the victims of a frosty fortune, but they can "create / A Genuine Summer in each others breast," a summer, I think, that inwardly is more real than Nature and Fate's winter. So when December comes lamenting the usurping of "his Raigne," the *his* means doubly the King of England and the King of Christmas. To amend this tragic state, Lovelace and Cotton can make bowers in each other's breasts where the two rejected kings may dwell with them. By this act of the imagination, Christian in its import (for the Kingdom of Heaven is within you), they will privately establish a greater reality than facts make visible. To the winter rains, which are December's tears ("Bid us lay in 'gainst Winter, Raine, and poize / Their flouds, with an o'reflowing glasse"), the poets will oppose "show'rs of old Greeke," so that both they and the mourning month can say of the two dead kings, "he hath his Crowne againe!"

It could be said that thus far "The Grasse-hopper," in spite of more subtle undertones, is merely a cavalier drinking song, not unlike Cotton's own "Chanson à Boire" or "Clepsydra." Alcohol was truly enough a cavalier cure; and one thinks at once of Alexander Brome, who advised his fellows in a number of drinking songs to seek refuge in wine, "in big-bellied bowls." "True philosophy lies in the bottle." Some of this vintner's logic certainly seeps into Lovelace's poem; in fact, it is the ostensible poetic mode. But we must not forget that the poem, though it began in death, passed into warmth and light, that though we are now in the night and the cold, we shall emerge into an eternal beatitude that will negate the temporal despair. The consciousness of eternity sounds even when the symbols of death and despair are paraded in Stanzas IV and V; it comes resolutely forward in "Our sacred harthes shall burne eternally / As Vestall Flames." Opposed to the Northwind, the savage symbol of death and evil, are the virginal fires of the ever-burning hearth within. This is the land of the heart—this "Aetna in Epitome"; but it is also something that cannot be lost because it is something "we will create." The general state has perished and Lovelace proposes to replace it with another state, inner, private.

The inner kingdom that Lovelace would found is not that resolution in isolation that charmed so many of his contemporaries,<sup>19</sup> but rather a revision of his own cosmogony. The hovering emblem of the winged Northwind, against which Lovelace directs the symbolic fires of the "sacred harthes" makes firm this revision, for Lovelace, as Milton, must have seen in Aquilo the bony face of death and known by heart those violent qualifications—*horrisonus, saevus, ferus, hor-rifer, crudelis*—that antiquity assigned to it. As Milton, too, he must have known the evil of the North, whence streamed the gonfalon of

<sup>19</sup> On the cavaliers' praise of solitude as an escape from the evils of the Commonwealth, see H. G. Wright, "The Theme of Solitude and Retirement in Seventeenth Century Literature," *Études Anglaises*, VII (1954), 22-35.

the father of death, a banner that men said blew significantly *ab sinistro*.<sup>30</sup> But the vestal fires that smash the North and the cold with their heart-heat, the "show'rs of old Greeke" that dry up tears and rain are augmented in their symbolic services by the display of lights that whip the "darke Hagge" of Night from "the light Casements." Within themselves, the frozen poets will make the grasshopper's lost summer again; but it is, I think, more than a lost summer; it is a shore of light, as Vaughan would have understood it. This will be done, Lovelace informs Cotton, by means of candles as potent as the planet Venus, the "cleare *Hesper*." They are candles in the way that the fire is a fire; in one sense wax, in another an inward light. By them Night is stripped forever of her dark cloak, for they shall "sticke there everlasting Day." The warmth and brightness of the grasshopper's year, realized finitely in Stanzas II and III, is thus made eternal. The poet puts down the Gothic horror, the grasshopper is made immortal, antique fearlessness returns.

With the last stanza the king, who has until now been hidden from us by a series of artistic translucencies, is revealed in his clear title. He is more than the king of the summer fields or the king of Britain, for in owning the world of his creative imagination, he is untempted by the world. The poet and his friend, who may also be the "himselfe" of the last line, have created a private kingdom that cannot fail because it is subject to no external forces.

Thus richer then untempted Kings are we,  
That asking nothing, nothing need:  
Though Lord of all what Seas imbrace; yet he  
That wants himselfe, is poore indeed.

In a way, with this last stanza, the Horatian music which we have heard steadily since the somber mezzo of Stanza V seems to reach symphonic fullness. We have this impression because we can understand how Horace, who fought on the wrong side at Philippi, would have appeared to Lovelace and Cotton as a kind of Roman cavalier who found the good way. To some extent the tropes of Horace have been heard in this poem. The tempest comes, the rain, the North-wind, but one annuls them with a heaped fire and a full cup.

horrida tempestas caelum contraxit, et imbres  
nivesque deducunt Iovem; nunc mare, nunc silvae  
Threicio Aquilone sonant. rapiamus, amici,  
occasionem de die, dumque virent genua  
et decet, obducta solvatur fronte senectus.  
tu vina Torquato move consule pressa meo.  
cetera mitte loqui: deus haec fortasse benigna  
reducat in sedem vice.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Following many scriptural expressions, the North and its winds are commonly associated with evil and death; see Augustine, *In Iob, liber I*, ed. Zycha (Vienna, 1895), p. 608, and his *Epistulae*, ed. Goldbacher (Vienna, 1904), p. 201; see also Eucherius, *Liber formularum*, PL, L.740-41.

But in Horace there is no eternity, no infinity; in fact, these illusions are shunned. The fire on the Sabine hearth is as real as the wind and the rain. It is Lovelace who creates the illusion and lives for it. In another sense, "himself" may not be Cotton at all, but this private world of the poet's own heart where all is warm and light and the grasshopper lives in a kingdom made eternal by his song.

*Johns Hopkins University*

---

<sup>21</sup> *Epodes* 13.1-8. See *Carmina*, 1.9.5-8, 13-14; 11; 17; 18; II.7 and 11; *Epistolae*, 1.5.

## THE COMPOSITION OF MEIER HELMBRECHT

By W. T. H. JACKSON

*Meier Helmbrecht* is one of the not inconsiderable number of medieval works which, to judge by the critical comments made upon them, have been regarded more as a playground for frustrated sociologists than as works of literature. The social status of its author, the site of the Meier's farm, the details of legal terminology and customary law have all been the object of careful examination.<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt that explanation and clarification of the references in the work would be of considerable assistance in interpreting it as literature; but, as any study of the attempted explanations will show, such references are casual and sometimes contradictory, and any attempt to base sociological conclusions on them is doomed to failure. A great deal of the critical literature on Helmbrecht is therefore of little help in studying the poem.

Two important exceptions may be noted. As early as 1918,<sup>2</sup> Pfannmüller made the very important observation that the well-known references to Neidhart von Reuenthal (vv. 217 ff.)<sup>3</sup> did indeed show that the author was acquainted with the description of Hildemar in Neidhart's work, but that the general tone of the poem and many of its stylistic features were reminiscent rather of Wolfram von Eschenbach. Pfannmüller was able to adduce a considerable number of quotations and parallels to support his view, some of which admittedly were of too general a nature to be proof of influence or of a similar artistic viewpoint. Unfortunately, Pfannmüller did not, to my knowledge, pursue this topic any further, nor did he try to draw from the stylistic similarities any conclusions about the structure of the work or about medieval compositional technique.

In 1951 an effort was made by George Nordmeyer to examine the construction of *Meier Helmbrecht* and to arrive at some conclusions

<sup>1</sup> See the bibliography in the excellent edition by Charles E. Gough (Oxford, 1947), pp. xxxiii ff., and add: G. Nordmeyer, "Structure and Design in Wernher's *Meier Helmbrecht*," *PMLA*, LXVII (1952), 259-87; F. Neumann, "Meier Helmbrecht," *Wirkendes Wort*, II, 4 (1951-52), 196 ff.; S. Gutenbrunner, "Zum *Meier Helmbrecht*," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*, LXXXV (1954), 64-66; L. Schmidt, "Zur Erdkommunion im *Meier Helmbrecht*," *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift*, Neue Folge, IV (1954), 150-52; Erika A. Wirtz, "Meier Helmbrecht's Cap," *MLR*, XLIX (1954), 442-50; H. Walter, "Contribution à l'étude de la diffusion de *Helmbrecht le fermier*," *Études Germaniques*, IX (1954), 155-59; Charles E. Gough, "The Homeland of Wernher der Gartenaere," *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society*, VII, 2 (1953).

<sup>2</sup> Ludwig Pfannmüller, "Meier Helmbrecht-Studien," *PBB*, XLIII (1918), 252 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Die Lieder Neidharts*, ed. E. Wiessner, Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, No. 44 (Tübingen, 1955), p. 116 (88, 29 f.).

about the purpose of the author and about his stature as an artist. The thoroughness of the study revealed the true difficulties of the interpretation of the work. These lay not so much in the points so often disputed, such as the status of the author, but in the numerous changes of tone and feeling, in the apparent inconsistencies in the behavior of the characters, and in particular in that of the old Meier, Helmbrecht's father. These inconsistencies Nordmeyer seeks to explain in great part by postulating extensive changes in the text, and it is indeed possible that the form of the poem as we have it differs from that written by Wernher.

I cannot agree, however, that the piece as it stands is "full of additions and omissions" and that it "needs excisions and emendations." Nor do I believe that it is "a carefully contrived and executed literary masterpiece in miniature, fashioned by a creative mind with great powers and consummate skill." The very inconsistencies and faults of construction are characteristic of a large body of medieval writing and constitute an affinity with the writings of Wolfram which Pfannmüller half perceived and which may well be important for any study of medieval compositional techniques.

What was the purpose of Wernher der Gartenaere and what kind of poem did he wish to write? The essential core of the poem, stripped of all ornamental material, is surely the decline and fall of the young Helmbrecht.<sup>4</sup> The poem is so constructed that the fate of the principal character is indicated and prophesied with a clarity which at times seems almost heavy-handed in its insistence on the reader's not missing the point. Such insistence is artistically distasteful to a modern reader, but there is no reason to think that Wernher felt it to be so. He had to make his point, and all other issues were in the end subordinate to the theme of fated destruction, as an analysis of the poem will show.

It is much harder to indicate the type of poem which Wernher was trying to write,<sup>5</sup> assuming that he had a particular genre in mind—not by any means a certain assumption. The short narrative poems of this period were usually versified tales such as the *Herzmaere* of Konrad von Würzburg or versified *Schwänke*. However coarse these stories were, it was not unusual for them to have a moral attached as a justification for telling them. Such stories are very frequently based on earlier material to be found in the medieval Latin collections such as the *Disciplina Clericalis*, in which the moral aspect was stressed. In the vast majority of these versified stories there can be no doubt that the main or sole purpose was entertainment of a very crude sort, but one of the principal sources from which their material was drawn

<sup>4</sup> Ehrismann's analysis (2, II, 101-106) is in my opinion accurate as far as it goes and contains several indications of ideas which he did not have the space to expand.

<sup>5</sup> An impressive list of the kinds of poem which Wernher could have written is to be found in Neumann's article mentioned in note 1.

may provide us with a clue to the type of work which Wernher had in mind.

One of the most widespread types of Latin tales in the late medieval period was the *exemplum*.<sup>6</sup> *Exempla* were drawn from a wide variety of sources, biblical, classical, and eastern, and they were illustrative of almost every aspect of everyday living. The stories themselves might be and often were highly immoral, but the purpose of the collections was to provide material for sermons. The story was told first, the audience was amused and its attention attracted, and the moral of the story was then forced home. The stories themselves had no doubt been extant all through the Middle Ages, but the collections were not made until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and it has been convincingly shown that they do not seem to have been used as sermon material before the thirteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, it was the new approach of the Franciscan friars to the popular sermon which brought the stories into widespread use for the purpose. In their desire to appeal to large numbers of people, they welcomed the use of amusing material, provided that a moral could be drawn from it. Unfortunately the pointing of the moral soon became subordinate to the amusement of the audience, and stories whose subject rendered their value for edification highly dubious were freely admitted to the collections, and in making a moral point of a sort they flouted all conceptions of morality by their general nature. Such *exempla*, as we have them in the collections, were in Latin and were quite short; doubtless they were suitably embroidered by the preacher in the course of his sermon. Their use ultimately became a scandal, and they were forbidden by several decrees of the church.<sup>8</sup> Although there is great variety in the form of the *exempla*, a remarkable number of them begin with some such word as "audivi." In other words, they seek to provide a link of personal experience between the hearer and the event. A large number, too, contain a considerable amount of dialogue, although here again there is a great deal of variation. Many of the stories in the *exempla* are brief versions of works of which much longer forms are extant.

Whether or not Wernher was a Franciscan friar, his education and reading were such that he must have been aware of the use of the *exemplum* and the purpose to which it was put. If, as some critics have stated,<sup>9</sup> he was a Franciscan, he would almost certainly have had access to collections of *exempla* and would have used them himself. He might, therefore, have decided to write a verse *exemplum* in which

<sup>6</sup> The best-known collections of about this period are those of Jacobus de Vitry and Etienne de Bourbon, *Speculum Laicorum* and *Liber Exemplorum*. For details see J. Th. Welter, *L'Exemplum dans la littérature religieuse et didactique au Moyen-Age* (Paris, 1927).

<sup>7</sup> See Welter and also M. J. A. Mosher, *The Exemplum in the Early Religious and Didactic Literature of England* (London, 1911), p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Mosher, p. 18.

<sup>9</sup> Gough, in edition cited, pp. xi ff.

he would use the same technique as in a sermon, namely, the expansion of a short theme into a tale pointing clearly to a well-defined moral. It may be useful to examine *Meier Helmbrecht* from this point of view.<sup>10</sup>

The opening lines, which detail possible types of literary composition, seem to be general categories of narrative, experience, love poetry, and didactic poetry, in the labeling of which the availability of rhymes may have played a part. Wernher's story will be narrative and is made more vivid by the claim to personal experience, the "audiui" of the *exemplum*. (It is worth noting that, in accordance with his own statement in vv. 1-2, the author is combining two types.) I do not think we need take the statement that he saw these things with his own eyes any more seriously than Wolfram's statement that he could not read. The purpose in both cases is to arouse the reader's attention.

Even more effective in this connection is the immediate introduction of the young Helmbrecht's hair and cap. Here is the actual *exemplum*, the visible sign and symbol of the vanity which is the first cause of his destruction. The reader is never allowed to forget the cap and the long fair hair, and mention is made of them at all crucial points in the poem: they are mentioned as a prime cause of Helmbrecht's inability to work on the farm (271 ff., 303 ff., 433, 510), and in the fourth and final dream they are mentioned as the symbol of the son's complete dissolution (625 ff.). We hear nothing of the cap or of the hair during Helmbrecht's stay with the family, possibly because any mention of it would have rendered the already highly improbable "non-recognition" scene even more implausible than it actually is. In the final scene, however, when the peasants are about to hang Helmbrecht, it is the first thing mentioned: "nu huete der hube, Helmbrecht"; and the destruction of the symbol precedes his own death.

Helmbrecht's downfall is brought about by a state of mind, in part induced by his own desire for such extravagance and in part by the weakness of his mother and sister in giving him a piece of clothing so hopelessly unsuited to his station in life. This is the essential core of the poem—the corruption of a youth so that he forsakes a station to which he has been assigned by divine providence for one which he can enter only by association with the worst elements in it, and thus bring about his ruin. The cap and long yellow hair—the signs of vanity and pride—are the symbols of this social and moral disintegration. In this its theme and in its treatment the story follows the pattern of the *exemplum* very closely.

<sup>10</sup> The word *exemplum* is mentioned in connection with *Meier Helmbrecht* in a review of Gough's edition of the poem by André Moret (*Études Germaniques*, III [1948], 422), and by Walter in the article cited in note 1. Gough regards the story as based on fact (see his edition, pp. xxv-xxx), and it is not clear to me why Moret states that he uses the *exemplum* as a basis, unless he is referring to his statements about preaching by the Franciscans. Walter thinks that the poem could be shown to be a series of *exempla*, but to do so would mean that the term would have to be understood so loosely as to deprive it of all meaning.



As we have seen, however, there was nothing to prevent a preacher from embroidering the theme in any way he saw fit, and this is precisely what Wernher does. The basic outline is kept firmly in mind, but the details are much more loosely handled. The description of the cap need not detain us, except to note that the scenes based upon it are imaginative and are designed to treat the themes of courtly epic. Whether such scenes could in fact have been fitted on to a cap is not a pertinent question. Wernher was well acquainted with the major themes of epic, both courtly and popular, and he divides them neatly into their various categories. They are depicted to show that Helmbrecht behaves as he does because the author believes that the externals of knighthood alone are important, and the more detail he can give the more entertaining the description will be and the deeper will be the effect. This description would have delighted Wolfram, and it contains several turns of phrase which are reminiscent of his style.

daz lün mit vogelen was bezogen  
reht als si waeren geflogen  
uz dem Spepharte.  
uf geburen swarte  
kam nie bezzer houbetdach  
dann man uf Helmbrehte sach.  
(vv. 35 ff.)

There are many other instances of Wernher's insertion of his personal opinion.

As Wolfram might have done, Wernher has allowed his interest in the description of the cap to run away with him. Having spun a magnificent tale of a knightly cap, he cannot resist giving the final touch by saying that the whole thing was made by a fugitive nun, who suffered from much the same delusions as Helmbrecht ("die nunne durch ir hovescheit / uz ir zelle was entrunnen," vv. 110 f.), but who had suffered the equivalent female ruin and was now sewing for her supper. Typically, Wernher slips in here an allusion to the dispute, popular in the courts of love, whether the upper (higher) or lower love was to be preferred:

min ouge der vil dicke siht,  
die daz nider teil verraten hat,  
da von daz ober mit schanden stat.  
(vv. 114 ff.)

At this point Gotelinde is mentioned for the first time!

Wernher's enthusiasm for his cap has swept him away, but we are amused and the description is after all significant for the story; it is the peg on which the narrative is hung, the symbol of vanity. The remaining garments which the foolishness of his mother and sister provide for Helmbrecht also show his desperate desire to rise above his station and are made even more ridiculous by the allusion to Neidhart von Reuenthal. Here, as so often in this poem and in *Parzival* too, it is possible, I think, to recognize the expression which



brought the allusion or digression to mind: Neidhart had pilloried the crudity of his rustic by equipping him with a mass of buttons. Wernher does the same, but this does not immediately recall the Neidhart allusion. The buttons would place such a youth beyond the rivalry of all others (including the author), especially in the dance. It is this reference ("swenne er an den reihen spranc") to the poetry for which Neidhart was famous that calls the association to mind.

It may be noted here that Wernher does not spare the women in his story. They are distinctly the weaker sex, unable to resist the thought of having a son or brother at court or of a marriage to a "gentleman." Their spoiling of Helmbrecht is a major contributing factor to his downfall. Here again Wernher is following a well-trodden path. It is unusual for women, except saints and martyrs, to emerge well from the *exempla* collections, and the numerous anti-feminine satires are too well known to need more than a mention here.<sup>11</sup> The courtly attitude is foreign to Wernher; he mentions it only to poke fun at it or as an element in a type of courtly life long since past.

The description of Helmbrecht's cap has taken up 223 lines—almost one-ninth of the whole poem and one-third of the first part. Except that we know the name of its owner and where he obtained the cap, we have no idea why it has been introduced or what is to be its function in the poem. It can hardly be disputed that this is an awkward beginning. A long epic poem may be slow in introducing its main theme, but in a poem whose total length is less than two thousand lines, the long description is surely out of proportion. Its length can be explained on two grounds: the one already stressed, that the cap was the concrete symbol of the moral of the story and was designed to catch the reader's attention; the other, less easy to demonstrate but perhaps even more important, that Wernher became fascinated with his own description. Wolfram sometimes shows the same lack of artistic sense. The Gawain incidents too have an artistic purpose, but they are disproportionately long in a poem whose subject is Parzival's attainment of the Grail. Would Gottfried von Strassburg have written thus? One need only consider this question in order to realize that much of the material in Wolfram's works is technically discursive and irrelevant to his main theme. Wernher follows the same pattern or lack of pattern. The explanation lies, of course, partly in the different temperaments of the various writers, but in my opinion the degree of training which each had received also played an important role. An author with a thorough training and a developed sense of rhetorical form and style was far less likely to interrupt his narrative with description, however amusing, of incidents and characters not germane to his story. At the same time, it would be unwise to exaggerate the effect of rhetorical training in its

<sup>11</sup> Bernard of Cluny, *De contemptu mundi*, and the satires of Walter Map may serve as examples.

narrower sense; its results are to be seen more in details of style and ornament than in general compositional techniques.

We have seen that Wernher did have a definite purpose in the introduction of Helmbrecht's cap at the beginning of the story. Having captured the reader's attention and turned his thoughts to courtly writing, he lost no more time in turning to his main theme:

Als si do dem stolzen  
siniu beine het gekleit,  
"min wille mich hinz hove treit,"  
sprach er. "lieber vater min,  
nu bedarf ich wol der sture din.  
mir hat min muoter gegeben  
und ouch min swester, sol ich leben,  
daz ich in alle mine tage  
immer holdez herze trage."  
(vv. 224 ff.)

He expresses only a desire to go to court, not to become a robber baron. The father, surprisingly, agrees to buy him a horse, if he can find one that is not too dear, but attempts to persuade him to stay. Of the speeches which follow we need note only a few points. The arguments used by the father are concentrated almost entirely upon the dangers of stepping out of one's own ordained place in the world. In spite of Nordmeyer's perfectly justified rejection of Ehrismann's *Tugendsystem*, the fact remains that there is much evidence to support the conception of those times that social levels are divinely ordained,<sup>12</sup> and I cannot escape the feeling that the lesson Wernher wants to inculcate is the necessity of staying in one's own prescribed social class. We may notice too that the rival speeches are almost exactly of the same length (father, vv. 235-58; son, vv. 259-78; father, vv. 279-98; son, vv. 299-328; father, vv. 329-60). There is evidence of care here. The dialogues are expressing the views not only of father and son but also of right and wrong.

wande selten im gelinget,  
der wider sinen orden ringet.  
din ordenunge ist der phluoc.  
(vv. 289 ff.)

The son bases his intentions entirely on the fact that he is too good for the farmer's life and thus convicts himself of the *superbia* which is the root of all evil and of which his cap is the outward symbol. Curiously enough it is the father who first mentions robbery. After saying that his son will have no power among noblemen, he shows that he will be the person to pay for any robbery committed. The young Helmbrecht, who has not given notice of any intention to rob, takes up his father's words and launches into a boastful speech about the

<sup>12</sup> It is impossible here to examine all the implications of the term *ordo*, but it is worth noting that the whole of the dialogue between the *plebeius* and the *mulier nobilis* in the *De amore* of Andreas Capellanus revolves about this theme.

plundering he intends to do. Did the father regard all noblemen as robbers, and is this intended to be a satire on the social conditions of the time? I think not. Helmbrecht was destined to damn himself in every conceivable way, including robbery, rape, and murder. Wernher allows the casual mention of the robbery by the father because he was thinking ahead, not from any desire to reveal the father's opinions about the nobility. It is necessary to labor this rather trivial point because many arguments about the moral tone of the poem have been based on such accidental statements.

We may in fact point out here that Wernher does not bring the true nobility into his poem. Helmbrecht is described simply as attaching himself to a lord who likes robbery and private war:

da was der wirt in den siten,  
daz er urluiges wielt  
und ouch vil gerne die behielt,  
die wol getorsten riten  
und mit den vinden striten.  
da wart der knabe gesinde.

(vv. 654 ff.)

No attempt is made to place his social standing, and moreover we never hear of his noble birth at all. The behavior of the whole troop is that of half-educated interlopers.<sup>18</sup> The fact that the company could be arrested and tried like common criminals shows that they were not men of great influence and thus could hardly be noblemen. The fact is that Wernher is not concerned with the realistic portrayal of Helmbrecht's activities but only with the results. He gives a most generalized description of the year Helmbrecht spends away from home, and, as we shall see, the comparison between the old and the new court has little of the atmosphere of reality.

The father's first round of pleading is in vain. Helmbrecht is unmoved. Although Wernher gives no indication of it, some time elapses between vv. 388 and 389, so that the horse can be obtained. Helmbrecht adds *lèse-majesté* to his other crimes (vv. 411 ff.) and prophesies his own ultimate fate. This is in the best tradition, and we need not enter into the discussion as to the presence of witnesses and the legal effect of the father's ban. It is clear that the father speaks in anger and uses the forms normal on such occasions. Much more important than the legal aspects is the inconsistent and unmo-

<sup>18</sup> Persons with names similar to those given by Helmbrecht appear in the poems *Meier Bets* and *Metzen Hochzeit*, which have recently appeared in a new and convenient form, ed. E. Wiessner, *Altdeutsche Textbibliothek*, No. 48 (Tübingen, 1956). Such characters are there called "halbedele" or "halbritter." See the note on this in Wiessner's ed., p. 18, and the extensive literature there quoted, as well as Ehrismann's note, 2, II, 103. I am not convinced that the "halbedele" were a definite or legally recognized class. Hugo von Trimberg, *Der Renner*, vv. 1565 ff., seems rather to be referring to their character, and Petersen, *Das Rittertum in der Darstellung des Johannes Rothe*, Quellen und Forschungen, CVI (Strassburg, 1909), also uses moral worth as a criterion to distinguish "die wahren Ritter," "die Adligen," and "die Unedelen." It is the "halbedelen" who bear names most like those of Helmbrecht's companions.

tivated behavior of the father immediately after the ban and after Helmbrecht returns home. There is a strong temptation to say that the ban is misplaced and should come later in the poem, but the rhyme seems to confirm the sequence of the verses and it would be hard to find a suitable place for it anyway. We are again forced to the conclusion that Wernher was not concerned with clear-cut motivation or even with consistency of character. He wishes to point up further features of Helmbrecht's reprehensible behavior and begins another series of speeches in which the father still stresses the (conventional) advantages of remaining in one's assigned social sphere, while the son attempts to strengthen his claims to nobility. So conventional, in fact, is Wernher's treatment at this point that he makes the son give the stock answer ("it is better to live morally") which, although completely out of character, does allow the father to continue his argument. Again this is typical of Wernher's looseness of compositional technique. While concentrating on the details of a conventional *Streitgedicht* presentation of the advantages of peasant and nobleman, he forgets what sort of person Helmbrecht is supposed to be.

It is no accident that Helmbrecht accuses his father of preaching, for that is precisely what he is doing. The poem at this point shows the advantages of the peasant life and the wrongs, both social and moral, which result from any attempt to move out of one's own sphere. In other words, we are here reading the development, the *moralisation* of the basic *exemplum* of the honest father and the overweening son. The dream series also follows this pattern. It is clear that the father is using the dream merely as a solemn warning and that the son is aware of the convention. The dreams fit exactly the subsequent pattern of Helmbrecht's downfall and are intended to place the stamp of the providential upon his ultimate fate.

Helmbrecht's speech ends at line 645, and the first part of the poem thus occupies almost exactly one-third of the total length. At this point, too, one-third of the story has been told. This first third has a general unity—the symbol, the effect of it on Helmbrecht, the formal discussion—but little unity of detail or consistency of motivation. The characters are defined as types but not as individuals, and it seems clear that Wernher is more concerned with showing specific defects of character and their effect on society than with delineating his persons in any depth.

The short description of Helmbrecht's career as a nobleman is a typical list of standard crimes, achieving its effects by the popular device of *frequentatio*, the piling up of similar expressions to overwhelm the reader. Clearly it would have been possible to have brought about Helmbrecht's destruction at this stage and the moral point would have been made. Wernher, however, had two themes which he wished to introduce, the comic recognition scene, in which the homecoming son (soldier, student, etc.) baffles his parents by his refusal to speak in his mother tongue, and the theme of the peasant wedding.

There can be no doubt that these two themes were already well known in his day and that both were excellent material for comic relief. Wernher's earlier interjections about the cap, its cost and splendor, are, as we have seen, in the Wolfram tradition of humorous aside comment, and Wernher's own delight in rough humor may be seen throughout the poem. Both the themes we have mentioned could be easily grafted on to the Helmbrecht story, though not without some loss of verisimilitude. We can hardly imagine Helmbrecht as homesick for the farm! No reason for this is given beyond the bare statement:

Do begunde er heim sinnen,  
als ie die liute phlagen  
heim zuo ir magen.  
(vv. 690 ff.)

Wernher now announces his new story:

Hie hebet sich ein maere,  
daz vil müelich waere  
ze verswigen den liuten.  
(vv. 697 ff.)

and a strange one it is. Helmbrecht has been banned by his father—but he is greeted with open arms by the whole household. He distributes presents which obviously come from his booty—and no one refuses them. His reasons here need not be sought in the father's desire to forgive him or in the mother's weakness of character. It is simply a matter of Wernher's having a funny scene which fitted Helmbrecht's general character and activities, and he wanted to make use of it. With lack of motivation and inconsistency of character he was not concerned. It probably did not occur to him that the father's acceptance of his son and his presents must seriously jeopardize his integrity in the minds of his readers. For him the father's character was fixed, and the homecoming scene is there for two reasons—for its comic effect and for the opportunity it affords to show Helmbrecht as guilty of another series of offenses.

It has been pointed out by Panzer<sup>14</sup> that the use of a foreign tongue to impress one's relations and the confusion arising from such use was already the subject of a well-known story before the time of

<sup>14</sup> Fr. Panzer, "Zum Meier Helmbrecht," *PBB*, XXXIII (1908), 391 ff. He refers to the well-known "gabelinum—Mistelinum" joke which is repeated many times in later German literature. Panzer's argument is that Gotelinde's statement "er antwurt mir in der latin / er mac wol ein pfafe sin" (vv. 741 f.) proves the existence of a story in which the boy had been sent to a school where he was supposed to learn Latin, but I think this to be quite untenable. Gotelinde described any language she did not understand as "Latin"; cf., "er redet polnisch" (it's all Greek to me). In Wiessner's ed., mentioned above, *Meizen Hochzeit* is dated in the first half of the fourteenth century and *Meier Bets* earlier. Reluctant though I am to postulate "oral tradition," I see too much correspondence between these two poems and the Wernher version to escape the conclusion that the *Bauernhochzeit* poem was already well-known before the two extant versions were committed to writing.

Wernher and that it is merely adapted here to suit the circumstances. Helmbrecht uses tags from many dialects and languages and succeeds in confusing everyone. The family did recognize him at first (they could hardly help doing so if he was still wearing his long hair and embroidered cap, as he certainly was later when he was hanged) but are allegedly confused by the strange language he speaks and believe him to be a foreign gentleman. Their speculations are, of course, intended to be amusing, and doubtless the primary consideration in introducing the scene was to provide a comical situation. It should not be overlooked, however, that there is an important connection with the main part of the story. The Meier asks Helmbrecht to speak in their native tongue:

du sprichest immer "deu sal"  
daz ich enweiz zwiu ez sal.  
ere dine muoter unde mich;  
daz diene wir immer umbe dich.  
sprich ein wort tiutischen.  
(vv. 755 ff.)

He is of course alluding to the Fifth Commandment: Honor thy father and mother that it may be well with thee and thou mayest live long on the land. Helmbrecht's reply ("Ey waz sakent ir geburekin / und jenes gunerte wib?" vv. 764 f.) is precisely the expression for which he was later mutilated by the hangman. It may be pointed out here that the father has no difficulty in playing on the son's "foreign greetings" when he returns home blind:

deu sal, her blinde!  
do ich was ingesinde  
ze hove wilen—des ist lanc—  
do lernte ich disen antvanc:  
"get ir nu, her blindekin!"  
(vv. 1713 ff.)

It is the formal insult to his parents (not to the rest of the household) which helps to bring about his doom. But it is Wernher's delight in the comic which expands the scene and incidentally makes it inconsistent and unrealistic.

Helmbrecht's reception is far better than he deserves and can be explained only on the ground that the members of the family are overwhelmed by his rise in the world. The father said categorically that he would not take a strange nobleman into his house, only his son; but he raises no objection to his son's presence in spite of his "courtly" behavior and even though he has cut him off from the family and knows of his criminal activities. There is no rational explanation of this. It might be argued that Wernher intends to show that the Meier was too kind to his son and that this is partly the cause of his wickedness. Such an explanation does not accord with the general picture of the Meier as a harsh but God-fearing man who observes the law and his religious duties, nor would it have appeared to a



medieval audience to mitigate the son's conduct as it does to the modern reader. Helmbrecht is accepted by his father so that the author can show him as ever more deeply involved in sin and so that an occasion can be provided for a comparison of the old and the new courtly life. For a person who did no more than bring eggs and cheese to the court, the Meier has a remarkable knowledge of the way the ladies and gentlemen spent their time. Here again it is an ideal and idealized picture which is described, just as Helmbrecht's reply is made up of the standard list of accusations leveled against the declining nobility—if they are indeed nobility, for once again we have only Helmbrecht's word that this was a noble's court.

Helmbrecht stayed seven days with his family, apparently without incident, but it is not until the very last day of his stay that several important questions are discussed. That the father should make one last appeal to his son to stay on the farm is natural enough; it is not even impossible to make him offer to support his son in virtual idleness. But why, at this late stage, should he ask him for the names of his associates? The answer is, of course, that Wernher had thought up or knew of a fine collection of comic names and intended to use them. A similar explanation may be given for the rather artificially introduced reasons for Helmbrecht's mistreatment of some of his victims.

The father's reply to these boastful speeches and catalogues of iniquity is mild enough:

Sun, die du da nennest,  
swie wol du sie erkennest  
baz danne ich, vil liebez kind  
doch swie raeze si da sint,  
so got wil selbe wachen,  
so kan ein scherge machen,  
daz si tretent swie er wil,  
waer ir noch dri stunt als vil.  
(vv. 1257 ff.)

But apparently the mention of "Schergen" touches a sensitive spot, for Helmbrecht immediately launches into a violent stream of threats and abuse and says that he will now abandon his magnificent plans for Gotelinde. The father apparently leaves him at this juncture, for the whole point of the next passage is that Helmbrecht is usurping the father's legal functions in arranging for his sister's marriage. The sister, too, is naturally guilty of disobedience, but not to the same extent. Once again we are able to observe two factors in Wernher's composition: he wishes to pile one more sin on the head of Helmbrecht, and he wishes to use a comic scene which will provoke laughter. The marriage which takes place is a variation on the *Bauernhochzeit*, made more ludicrous by the attempts of the guests to ape the manners of the court. Wernher shows a very good feeling for comic detail in these scenes, which he obviously enjoyed writing; but again it is

significant that the celebration is interrupted not by attacks of the rival suitor or village, but by the forces of the law.

From this point there is no light relief. Wernher has now to point his moral and to make his lesson as terrifying and impressive as he can. It is pointless to speak of the appalling horror and cruelty of the final scenes. Wernher's readers needed only to walk out into the street to see criminals as badly mutilated as Helmbrecht, and they felt little sympathy for them, for such crimes had affected most of their lives too. Wernher's intention was to make the punishment as vivid as possible, and it is for this reason that he makes use of the device of having Helmbrecht as the tenth man and thus having him mutilated rather than summarily hanged. The behavior of the Meier is in strict accord with his duty as a citizen, a fact emphasized by Wernher when he shows that the father had to struggle with his own feelings in being so hard-hearted toward his own son:

Der wirt honlachte,  
swie im sin herze krachte—  
er was sin verch und sin kint,  
swie er doch stuende vor im blint.  
(vv. 1775 ff.)

But the story demanded that the sin be punished, and the father is at pains to mock at Helmbrecht, to imitate his language, to recall his former glory, and to make it clear that he is no longer his son. Significantly, Helmbrecht spends a year in hopeless wandering, the same length of time that he had spent with the robber band, and his end comes at the hands of his victims, without even the benefit of decent shriving and absolution.

We may regard the structure of *Meier Helmbrecht*, then, as follows. The main theme is the inevitable destruction of the person who attempts to rise above the station which providence has assigned to him, especially if such an attempt is accompanied by sinful acts. This theme Wernher handles by introducing at the beginning of his poem the symbol of pride, a cap of such outrageous luxury that it turned the head of its wearer. This cap is associated with the idealistic, not the realistic, features of knightly life, and it is made by a nun whose experience reflects that of Helmbrecht—the rejection of her destined way of life through *hovescheit*. This cap and its results constitute the *exemplum*, the story on which the moral is based.

The story falls into three clear divisions: the rejection of the family calling by Helmbrecht and the first parting from the father (to v. 645); the homecoming and final rejection of the father's advice (to v. 1292); and the ultimate punishment. These stages, of almost exactly equal length, are marked off by breaks between father and son, in the first instance by Helmbrecht's departure to the "burg," in the second by his angry reply to his father's remark about the "Schergeren." We know that the father left at this point, since he was not present during the discussion with Gotelinde (v. 1431). These stages are the standard



positions of the wheel of fortune: the rise because of inflated ambition and misplaced efforts to move into another class; the realization of the ambition, expressed in terms of pride; disrespect to parents and the misleading of his sister; and the fall, in which each of his failings and sinful acts is duly rewarded. This plan is so clear and Wernher takes such pains to impress the moral aspects of the story on his readers that it is very difficult to escape the conclusion that for him the poem was essentially a sermon in verse, cast in poetical form so as to be more palatable but constructed basically in the sermon fashion.

Within this framework, however, Wernher allows himself considerable latitude, untroubled by inconsistencies which worry the modern reader. The description of the cap, essential though it is to the story, is carried far beyond the limits which would have been required to make his point. The reason for this exuberance is undoubtedly sheer joy in comic description and a delight in tilting at the more exaggerated features of courtly life. This is not satire—it is simply comic. The same may be said of the introduction of the "non-recognition" scene, which again can be worked into the story and is recounted with full humor.

There is much less justification, structurally, for the introduction of the comic names and the description of the characters of Helmbrecht's associates, but here again Wernher's love of the grotesque is the reason for their introduction. He was clearly following the Neidhart tradition. We have already seen that the peasant wedding is adapted to the story, again for comic effect. It should be emphasized that these descriptions and incidents are introduced as scenes and that Wernher does not feel it necessary to make the details consistent with the rest of his story. This is particularly true in characterization. Wernher does not seek verisimilitude or consistent character development and motivation, but rather emphasizes a few salient points in each character which are important for his didactic purposes.

It is probably true that character development in the modern sense is foreign to most medieval works of literature, since the medieval conception of the forces molding character was different from ours. It is in our view inconsistent that the Meier should receive his son on his return from his year of plundering, and by modern standards his rejection of the maimed youth is cold-blooded and unnatural. But these actions were demanded by the story, so that wrong-doing could receive its due reward. Much effort has been expended in attempting to demonstrate character conflicts and involved motivations for minor incidents. There is little point in such efforts. Nor are we completely justified in describing *Meier Helmbrecht* as a "realistic" poem, a term which gives rise to much misunderstanding. Wernher was possessed of considerable descriptive powers and attained a great degree of vividness in his descriptions of peasant life (which he obviously knew a great deal better than he did life at court), but his purpose is not realistic description. He wishes to show specific types and how

their virtues and vices appear under a defined set of circumstances. The virtue of his poem is that the pungent and powerful writing makes the storytelling effective in spite of the use of types.

At the beginning of this analysis we referred to the resemblances between *Meier Helmbrecht* and the works of Wolfram von Eschenbach. There is, of course, no possible comparison in artistic level, but nevertheless a study of the composition of Wernher's poem is instructive for an understanding of Wolfram. We have seen that absolute consistency of character and motivation was not part of Wernher's purpose and that he was easily led by a chance word to a prolonged reference or by an interesting situation to introduce a fairly long digression. This is also true of Wolfram. Each had a specific purpose, each had a clear framework within which he operated. But each too was perfectly capable of digression and inconsistency in detail because of a delight in the portrayal of individual incidents. It is not inconceivable that this looseness of composition was one reason for Gottfried's criticism of Wolfram. The present chaotic state of Wolfram criticism is due in part at least to attempts to find consistency where none was intended and to demand from a medieval writer qualities and standards which he neither possessed nor sought. *Meier Helmbrecht* has suffered only in a minor way from sociological criticism parallel to the theological exegesis of *Parsival*, but the reason for this kind of treatment of the poems is the same—a refusal to grant to the medieval author a freedom in composition which he thought was his due.

*Meier Helmbrecht* remains, as Ehrismann and Gough have said, essentially a didactic poem. The author wished to preach a sermon on the ills of misplaced ambition.<sup>18</sup> He succeeds brilliantly, largely because of his gift for depicting the comic and the grotesque. But the comic and the grotesque are incidental to his purpose, not of its essence. The poem is a sermon in verse, and its composition reflects its origin in popular literature.

Columbia University

<sup>18</sup> It must be confessed that I have not been able to find in any of the collections I have examined an *exemplum* which corresponds to the Helmbrecht story. There are numerous cases of the ambitious peasant and the ungrateful son but not in this combination. Is it possible that Wernher selected the description of Neidhart's dandy, with his long hair and cap (vv. 86, 6 ff.), and determined to build a story around the theme in the manner of the *exemplum*?

CATHERINE II, CHARLES-JOSEPH PANCKOUCKE, AND  
THE KEHL EDITION OF VOLTAIRE'S *ŒUVRES*

By GEORGE B. WATTS

In one of his last letters, written only a few months before his death, Voltaire paid tribute to his friend of long standing, Charles-Joseph Panckoucke, and promised him that he would spend the rest of his life correcting his writings for the latter's planned edition of his complete works.<sup>1</sup> For this he was making additions, notes, and corrections on blank pages inserted in a copy of the "édition encadrée." Death overtook him before he could complete the revision. He had had time to work on only "trente et quelques demi-volumes" of the forty in the edition.<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after Voltaire's death Panckoucke went to Ferney with an order from Madame Denis to deliver to him these volumes and "le reste des manuscrits," in accordance with Voltaire's request.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, he acquired by purchase or gift a large number of letters to Voltaire from such prominent figures as d'Argental, La Harpe, Condorcet, and d'Alembert.

Expecting to begin publication of the new edition in 1778 or 1779, he printed a prospectus and solicited subscriptions. Among those who promptly supported the venture was Catherine II, who, on October 17, 1778, requested her Paris correspondent, Baron Grimm, to place her order for 100 copies of the edition which was to be arranged "par matières."<sup>4</sup>

But Panckoucke was destined to become—in the words of Gustave Desnoiresterres—only the "précurseur" and not the "Messie de cette œuvre colossale."<sup>5</sup> For reasons which have never been fully understood, he sold his manuscripts and publishing rights to Beaumarchais. Beuchot, the author of the article "Panckoucke" in the *Biographie Universelle* by Michaud, explained this sale by asserting—without giving his source—that Panckoucke had turned to Catherine II for support and had offered to dedicate the edition to her. Because after seven months he still had not received a reply, he sold his materials and rights to Beaumarchais, who was glad to have an operation which he could use as an explanation for the fortune he had gained from the sale of arms to the American insurgents. The day after the signing

<sup>1</sup> "Lettres inédites de Voltaire à Panckoucke," *Mercur de France*, LXXXIV (1910), 94.

<sup>2</sup> Bachaumont, *Mémoires secrets* (London, 1780), XII, 127.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146; and Longchamp and Wagnière, *Mémoires sur Voltaire* (1826), II, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Voltaire, *Œuvres Complètes* (Paris, 1882), I, 465.

<sup>5</sup> Gustave Desnoiresterres, *Voltaire: Son retour et sa mort* (1876), p. 45.

of the contract, Panckoucke received a letter from the Empress, who accepted the dedication, assumed the costs of the undertaking, and sent a letter of exchange for 150,000 francs.<sup>6</sup>

Many writers on Voltaire have discussed his relationships with Panckoucke and the latter's connection with the Kehl edition. Some have repeated the story as told by Beuchot in the *Biographie Universelle*. Georges Bengesco—apparently unaware that Beuchot was the author of this article—in his authoritative *Voltaire: Bibliographie de ses œuvres* (1890) asserted that Beuchot had "borrowed" the details which he gave in his preface to the first volume of his edition of Voltaire from the *Biographie Universelle* and stated: "Ces détails nous semblent erronés." He explained what he called an "erreur" on the part of this writer by saying that the latter had confused the sum of 30,000 rubles, sent on December 15, 1778, by Catherine II to Madame Denis in payment for Voltaire's library, with what he believed to be money forwarded to Panckoucke to finance the new edition.<sup>7</sup> Others have not understood why Panckoucke should have abandoned the undertaking so suddenly. Wagnière, in his *Mémoires sur Voltaire*, questioned the rumor, repeated by Bachaumont, that Panckoucke was in danger of bankruptcy at the time.<sup>8</sup> Desnoiresterres and Brandes sidestep the question by the remark that Panckoucke had recoiled at the prospect of obstacles and even persecutions.<sup>9</sup> Influenced by Bengesco's nonacceptance of the *Biographie Universelle* story, the present writer, in an article entitled "Voltaire and Charles-Joseph Panckoucke" also left unsettled the problem of Catherine's participation and of Panckoucke's reasons for selling out to Beaumarchais.<sup>10</sup>

A recently uncovered statement by Panckoucke himself which seems to have been previously overlooked—except probably by the *Biographie Universelle* author—establishes the facts, if one may accept Panckoucke's own word, that Catherine II did agree to subsidize his projected edition, and that financial difficulties were responsible for his hasty transfer of materials to Beaumarchais. Furthermore, it supplies other data on Panckoucke's negotiations with Beaumarchais in connection with the Kehl edition.

In the fall of 1791 Panckoucke was a candidate for the national legislative assembly which was convened on October 1. To promote his cause he put out on September 9, 1791, a brochure entitled *Lettre de M. Panckoucke à Messieurs le président et électeurs de 1791*. This publication, which gave many details of his life and labors, was frank to the point of admitting the fact that as a youth he had been

<sup>6</sup> *Biographie Universelle*, XXXII, 62-63.

<sup>7</sup> Georges Bengesco, *Voltaire: Bibliographie de ses œuvres* (1890), IV, 109.

<sup>8</sup> Longchamp and Wagnière, II, 25. Bachaumont had said on May 20, 1779, that Panckoucke was "à la veille de faillir" and had put "la plus grande économie dans sa maison" (XIV, 56).

<sup>9</sup> Desnoiresterres, p. 453; Georg Brandes, *François de Voltaire* (New York, 1930), II, 351.

<sup>10</sup> *Kentucky Foreign Language Quarterly*, I (1954), 193.

imprisoned for six weeks in Lille. He gave as one of his qualifications his firm friendship with Buffon, Voltaire, Rousseau, Abbé Raynal, and various government officials.

His version of the affair in question is somewhat as follows. He related how Voltaire left him his manuscripts and how he had gathered others so that he owned over 10,000 letters and some twenty volumes of manuscript. He sought a publisher of his edition in Lyons and Geneva without success. Being in financial difficulties and having suffered bankruptcy to the amount of 340,000 francs in the early months of 1777, he decided to solicit the aid of Catherine II, to whom he wrote through Baron Grimm. Using his own words: "La réponse tarda six mois, je crus qu'on ne m'en ferait point." Accordingly he sought out Beaumarchais, who "venait d'élever une imprimerie à Kehl" and offered to sell him all his Voltaire manuscripts. Beaumarchais paid him 100,000 francs on account and agreed to make full settlement later. "À peine avais-je signé que M. le Baron de Grimm me pria de passer chez lui." On his arrival Grimm said, "Lisez, homme de peu de foi. L'impératrice accepte toutes vos propositions." En effet une lettre de quatre pages de sa propre main, une lettre de change de 100,000 livres sur MM. de Germany et Haller, la promesse de faire d'autres fonds me convainquirent que je m'étais beaucoup trop pressé."<sup>11</sup>

He gave the following information in reference to his bankruptcy. He had suffered a failure of 340,000 francs and, believing himself "perdu," sought aid from friends, among them Buffon, who assisted him in securing on April 4, 1777, a judgment from M. Amelot, "ministre de la maison du roi," which permitted him to suspend payments. He succeeded, however, in surmounting the crisis and was able to continue operations without having to avail himself of the official decree, receiving on May 7, 1778, a letter of commendation from M. Amelot because of his "honnêteté."<sup>12</sup>

Narrating his later dealings with Beaumarchais, Panckoucke asserted that the former had, by 1791, expended some 3,000,000 francs "pour donner la plus belle édition qu'on ait jamais faite d'aucuns livres en un aussi grand nombre de volumes. Il n'a pas encore recouvré la moitié de ses fonds. Le public lui doit de la reconnaissance, et il a été cruellement calomnié à ce sujet." He then related this example of his magnanimity toward Beaumarchais: "Je puis assurer que les plus grands sacrifices ne lui ont rien coûté. Instruit de sa position à l'égard de cet ouvrage, j'ai transigé avec lui à 172,000

<sup>11</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 17. In another of his contemporary publications Panckoucke gave the following information concerning the Voltaire manuscripts and his expenditures before abandoning the project: "J'observe que la rédaction de cette édition, l'acquisition de plus de trois à quatre mille lettres originales de Voltaire, les présents faits aux secrétaires et domestiques de Madame Denis, plus de soixante exemplaires donnés gratis, m'ont coûté plus de 95 mille livres." *Encyclopédie Méthodique: Manufactures, arts et métiers* (1790), VIII, 23.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

livres, et j'ai dit quelquefois en plaisantant que je lui avais donné un diner qui m'avait coûté 128,000 livres, parce qu'en effet un diner fut la suite de notre transaction."<sup>13</sup> This statement would seem to indicate that the original price was indeed 300,000 francs, "comme on avait fait courir le bruit,"<sup>14</sup> and not 600,000 nor 160,000 as Bengesco and Desnoiresterres claim.<sup>15</sup>

Davidson College

---

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> Desnoiresterres, p. 453.

<sup>15</sup> *Op. cit.*, IV, 110 and p. 453.

## THE FUNCTION OF *LA COLÈRE DE SAMSON* IN *LES DESTINÉES*

By JAMES DOOLITTLE

There is no doubt that Vigny intended to include *La Colère de Samson* in *Les Destinées*. Yet the colossal figure of Samson, knowingly and voluntarily bowing to the weaknesses of his own nature, and the voluptuous portrait of the empty-headed and utterly selfish Dalila seem out of place in a group of poems representing man's disdainful and morally triumphant struggle against the enormous, impersonal powers of Nature, Destiny, and God. Available documents show that from 1849 until his death in 1863 Vigny made this poem a part of each of his several plans for the group which became *Les Destinées*.<sup>1</sup> Our questioning of the poem must, therefore, be limited to asking in what way it furthers the over-all intention of the group.

It should be plain to any reader of Vigny that throughout his work his major preoccupation, as in the case of any true poet, is with the nature of humanity and humanity's place in the universe. It should be equally plain that he scorns the mass of mankind and confines his interest to a most noble and rare type, an *homme d'élite* whom it is difficult to describe otherwise than as a distillate of man's highest potentialities. I think it is fair to say of his writings in general that they seek to represent, or define, and then to evaluate, the nature and operations of this type. Certainly this is the most important objective of *Chatterton*, *Stello*, and *Daphné*, of many of the *Poèmes antiques et modernes*, and above all of the masterpieces *Servitude et grandeur militaires* and *Les Destinées*.

As one follows this endeavor through Vigny's work, one becomes aware of a wide variation in the roles attributed to what for convenience I shall call his hero. Proceeding chronologically, we find, for example, that the hero in the early poem *Hélène* is a militant and spectacular leader of a nation and a civilization, in *Le Déluge* a representative of humanity in defiance of an arbitrary and insensate divinity, in *Stello* and *Daphné* an aloof but exalted intellectual and spiritual prophet, in *La Canne de jonc* an obscure and devoted soldier, in *La Flûte* a poor man "aveuglé d'esprit"—and so on.

The hero's nature, on the other hand, remains essentially constant, changing only in the direction of increased detail and clarity of definition. This character is a composite, a duality, a double protagonist, set against an infinitely more powerful antagonist. Thus Cinq-Mars

<sup>1</sup> The various projects for the group are presented by Fernand Baldensperger in the *Pléiade* edition of Vigny's works.



and de Thou are indispensable to one another in opposition to Richelieu, Hélène and Mora against the Turk, Julien and Libanius against human history. Stello and the Docteur-Noir oppose together a bourgeoisie-dominated society, as do Chatterton and the Quaker. Emmanuel's defiance of God, in *Le Déluge*, is given its meaning by Sara. It is obvious that Eloa, the angel whose rather surprising femininity is so carefully stressed by Vigny, would have no significance without Satan. And I need hardly remind the reader of the pairing of the Berger with the mysterious Eva.

While the dual hero is usually represented by two persons, most often a male-female couple, there are instances, such as *Le Mont des Oliviers*, in which the hero, while still dual, is not a couple, and others, like *La Bouteille à la mer* or *La Mort du loup*, where at least one partner is not even a person. But the duality device itself persists from one end of Vigny's work to the other.

This duality seldom constitutes a person, i.e., a creation of human character. Each hero, rather, is a pair of idealized qualities or notions, a pair of symbols, perhaps, of certain grand ideas or intellectual aspirations. Thus the *Hélène* of 1822 presents Hélène and her lover Mora, prophetess-apostle and military leader respectively:

Deux âmes, s'élevant sur les plaines du monde,  
Toujours l'une pour l'autre existence féconde,  
Puissantes à sentir avec un feu pareil,  
Double et brûlant rayon né d'un même soleil,  
Vivant comme un seul être, intime et pur mélange....

This inseparable couple goes into battle: "L'ange exterminateur vient, guidé par la foi." While neither member of the pair could be effective without the other, the poem's title, as well as its text, makes it plain that the leading principle is the feminine one, the incomprehensible one of faith and values spiritual, rather than the easily understood idea of force.

An analogous dichotomy is expressed in the concluding chapter of *Stello* (1832), where Vigny asks if Stello does not resemble "quelque chose comme le *sentiment*," the Docteur-Noir "quelque chose comme le *raisonnement*. Ce que je crois," he goes on, "c'est que si mon cœur et ma tête avaient, entre eux, agité la même question, ils ne se seraient pas autrement parlé." We recall that it is the poet who provokes the reasoner to speak, not the other way around. The "question" in *Stello* is that of the composition, the proper function and attitude in society of the poet-prophet leader of mankind, the man of genius. We gather that he must be possessed of both head and heart and that his activity must spring from a certain, or rather uncertain, not clearly definable, proportion between these two not clearly defined faculties.

The head-heart duality is somewhat more fully described in a passage from the casket scene of *Shylock* (1828), the only passage in the translations from Shakespeare, by the way, which differs substantially

from its original. Bassanio, finding nothing to guide his choice of caskets, says that man can rely only upon his heart to find out truth. The term *cœur* is here explicitly differentiated from mind, the faculty of reason, and from the senses, the faculty of force; it is distinguished also from soul, the faculty of religious faith. It designates instead a mysterious faculty of *conscience*, desire, instinct, giving rise to an otherwise unaccountable penchant, caprice, emotion; and the source of *cœur* finally is said to be "les Cieux." In other words, only through this faculty, incomprehensible in its origin and in its works, can eternity, perfection, ultimate truth, be revealed to man.<sup>2</sup>

*Cœur*, *conscience*, feeling, and the mysterious apprehension of the ideal are all brought together in the well-known passage on honor in *La Canne de jonc* (1835): "L'Honneur, c'est la conscience, mais la conscience exaltée. —C'est le respect de soi-même et de la beauté de sa vie porté jusqu'à la plus pure élévation et jusqu'à la passion la plus ardente." *Honneur* resides in man's bosom "comme un second cœur où siègerait un dieu. De là," the passage continues, "lui viennent des consolations intérieures d'autant plus belles, qu'il en ignore la source et la raison véritables; de là aussi des révélations soudaines du Vrai, du Beau, du Juste: de là une lumière qui va devant lui."

*Conscience*, passion, light, revelation of the True, the Beautiful, the Just, mystery, consolation, source of moral strength—these attributes of the *cœur* of Stello and Bassanio, of the *honneur* of the humble heroes of *Servitude*, are all ascribed to the patroness of *Les Destinées*, the feminine partner in the *Maison du Berger*, to Eva. To them the characterization of Eva adds others: love, capricious authority, disillusionment with *le vulgaire*, the "divine faute" (which I take to mean the original sin of Eve: the pursuit of knowledge). The whole character is summed up in one line: "L'enthousiasme pur dans une voix suave." Such, for the *Poèmes philosophiques*, is the second essential element, the feminine component, the motivating principle, of

<sup>2</sup> *Shylock, le marchand de Venise* (1828), Act II, Scene ii (Pléiade edition, I, 502):

Par saint Paul! pas un signe, un mot n'y fut gravé  
Qui conduise l'esprit, vainement éprouvé;  
Soulève-toi, mon cœur, et brise cette entrave!  
Je trouve, en y songeant, ceci profond et grave;  
Et ce qui là-dessus me passe dans l'esprit,  
Je ne sais avant moi si personne l'a dit:  
Lorsque pour nous guider la raison est sans flamme,  
Que les sens aveuglés sont impuissants, que l'âme  
Ne reçoit nul secours, nulle inspiration  
De la foi, nul soutien de la religion,  
Si l'homme dans son cœur descend, et qu'il écoute  
Un mouvement secret qui le pousse en sa route,  
Conscience ou désir, instinct mystérieux,  
Il trouve ce qu'en nous peut-être ont mis les Cieux.  
Oui, j'en croirai mon cœur, son penchant, son caprice,  
Le premier mouvement par lequel il frémit,  
Qui l'éloigne ou l'attire, et je m'arrêterai  
Sur cette émotion quand je l'éprouverai.

the *homme d'élite*, the philosopher-poet for whom the jewel of Poetry illuminates "les pas lents et tardifs de l'humaine Raison," thus making of him the interpreter and prophet, the Berger, the Shepherd of mankind.

The single exception in *Les Destinées* to the usage of the dual hero is *La Colère de Samson*.<sup>3</sup> Unlike the other examples I have mentioned, the Samson-Dalila pair does not seem to constitute a protagonist; on the contrary, the action of each partner is opposed to that of the other. And the poem differs in other ways from the rest of the *Poèmes philosophiques*. For instance, the characterization of Samson departs fundamentally from Vigny's customary handling of his man against destiny. And the radical difference in the presentation of Dalila from that of the other women in the group calls for justification; this is usually supplied (oversimply, I think) by making Dalila stand for the enslaving love which is one of the crosses laid upon man by Fate.

Of Eva's attributes, Dalila possesses only that of capricious authority. Her power is the power of sheer materiality. To the beauty of her body is added material treasure (bracelets, bands, golden rings). She is identified with a specific people or region (daughter of Hatsor), and with its religion: her breasts are "tout chargés d'amulettes anciennes"; in the temple festival she is placed beside the sacrificial heifer, crowned, and worshiped; she dies, with her gods and their altars, in the wreckage of the temple. She thus represents sensuality and venality adorned with trappings of an institutional religion.

Samson also bears a religious mark. He is a Nazarite, he believes in the ceremonial origin of his strength, he twice accuses Woman of ceremonial impurity, and his God is the Jehovah of the Pentateuch.

Like the Christ of *Le Mont des Oliviers*, Samson is called shepherd, *pasteur*. By definition he is the leader of his people. His outstanding trait is his extraordinary physical strength, which presumably springs from the faithful observance of an arbitrary taboo. Yet, with his hair still uncut, "la force divine obéit à l'esclave": the physical strength does not have a moral counterpart. On the contrary, it is subservient, and willfully so, to Dalila.

Unlike the Samson of *Judges*, this one goes directly from his capture to the temple festival. His last feat of strength is accomplished despite his shaven head, nor does he make any prayer. His strength, therefore, in fact depends not at all upon the observance of a taboo.

<sup>3</sup> And the outstanding exception in the work as a whole appears to me *Moïse*, whose exclusion from *Les Destinées* has surprised more than one reader. The group's opening poem, however, announces the Christian dispensation, not the Mosaic, as one of its basic materials. The figure of the man of flesh almost wholly subjugated by the spirit, and thereby isolated from ordinary human intercourse, is supplied by the Christ of *Le Mont des Oliviers*. *Moïse*, moreover, is heroic, even Byronic, in conception and character, while the Christ is philosophical in the sense, at least, of the group's subtitle. Splendid poem that it is, the early *Moïse* lacks the maturity and especially the originality, the peculiarly Vignesian quality, which characterizes *Les Destinées* throughout.

His strength is and always was his own; in giving up his secret he has in reality given up nothing; he has merely acknowledged his total submission to the single, natural principle of physical force. For Samson and Dalila are almost identically composed: they are not a duality, but two aspects of a single essence.

If Samson's surrender is bitter to him, it is because he knows that he has wrought his own downfall by trying to follow an instinctive urge toward another principle. His wrath is expressed in an outcry against the fact that he is nothing but a physique, against the impossibility of satisfying his yearning for *conscience*, against the apparent refusal of nature and religion alike to permit him to be a man. He does not understand, however, that his failure lies in accepting prescribed formulas and depending upon traditional opinions and values instead of creating his own. He is indignant at being afflicted with the "besoin de caresse et d'amour," not comprehending that only through having this need and making it serve him is a man able fully to realize his manhood. Because Samson has sought, however unwittingly, for Eva, spirituality incarnate, and has found only Dalila, he concludes that there is no Eva ("ce que j'ai voulu n'existe pas!"), and he logically holds God responsible for his monstrous vision of the Sodom and Gomorrah to come. The manner of both his life and his death is determined by his following the way of superstitious acquiescence to the forces of nature and of ritualistic tradition, rather than the way of "respect de soi-même et de la beauté de sa vie," of free-minded confidence in the resources of his own individuality. And as his life has been a failure, so his death accomplishes only destruction. Destruction of three thousand enemies and of a foreign religion, no doubt; destruction also of himself and of Dalila, the embodiment of the false principle responsible for his failure. His achievement, if such it be, is solely a negative one.

Samson's wrath is misdirected. His complaint can be justified only by his complete lack of comprehension of the nature and splendor of man's spiritual part, or else by admitting that the proper role of humanity is passive submission to the traditional formulations of Fate, Nature, God, or whatever one chooses to call the nonhuman forces affecting man. The group *Les Destinées* is an outspoken rejection of this principle; it should follow, then, that, whatever Vigny's intention for the poem in 1838-1839, the year of its composition, in the context of *Les Destinées* Samson is to be pitied, perhaps, but he must also be rejected and condemned, not glorified.

While we cannot be certain that the posthumous publication of the group by Ratisbonne in 1864 is in complete accordance with Vigny's wishes as to selection and order of the poems, it seems to me that there is no need to cavil either at the inclusion of *La Colère de Samson* or at its position in the sequence. Samson is set between the obscure American pioneer of *La Sauvage* and the silently fighting wolf. As a man, he is clearly inferior to both. He represents, I believe, the

antipodes of the *homme d'élite*. He sums up in a single treatment those other figures in the collection who are idolized or feared by the mass for their material strength: the harpies of *Les Destinées*, the demagogues, the false prophets, of *Les Oracles*, the warring red men of *La Sauvage*, the czar of *Wanda*, the hunters of *La Mort du loup*, and even the poet's knightly and forgotten ancestors in *L'Esprit pur*. If the movement of the group can be correctly called a gradual emergence of spirit from its matrix of tradition and substance, then the poem representing the nullity of physical force and consecrated opinion may well find its place in close proximity with those others, like *Les Destinées*, *Les Oracles*, *La Sauvage*, and *La Mort du loup*, which emphasize these things.

For Vigny the proper work of man is accomplished not because of, or in imitation of, nature and its creator, but in spite of them, over the opposition of the crushing, nonhuman forces which they exert eternally against man. Man's true strength lies not in the physique or the incoherent instincts of a Samson, but in his *conscience*, in his conscious, enlightened awareness of possessing a spirit by which the importance of things physical can be set at naught and the things themselves made to serve spiritual ends. Given the obstacles that *conscience* must overcome, the strength of man's spirit must be very great. Only the *homme d'élite* is so endowed. Only he can serve as a medium for the work of the human spirit, the work not of God, but of man, the work which is not that of destiny, but rather that by which destiny is annulled, the work not of nature, but of art.

Ohio State University

## BAUDELAIRE AND RIMBAUD: THEIR VOYAGES

By RALPH BEHRENS

The critic A. Barre, in *Le Symbolisme*,<sup>1</sup> comments that Rimbaud's *Le Bateau Ivre* "rappelle encore trop le Baudelaire du *Voyage*." It can hardly be denied that there is a similarity between the poems, nor that Baudelaire's poem has influenced Rimbaud's. Yet the real significance of comparing these two poems does not, it seems to me, lie in their similarities so much as in their differences. And the differences, I believe, grow essentially out of the differing attitudes, toward themselves and toward life, of the two poets.

The titles give some immediate clues to the differences that will be seen in greater detail as we read the poems. The fact that Baudelaire chose to entitle his poem simply *Le Voyage* does not, on the surface, indicate more than the universal desire to travel, to get away from one's small, workaday world. There is nothing striking or unusual about such a title. On the other hand, Rimbaud's title startles. By connotation, such a bizarre heading as *Le Bateau Ivre* leads the reader to expect something unique.

In Baudelaire's poem, the author pictures himself and others as taking numerous trips on boats to various exotic places, sometimes horrible, sometimes beautiful. But Rimbaud does not merely take a trip; he becomes the boat itself. If the sea is "life" in both poems, it is significant that Rimbaud, by becoming the boat, is attempting to put himself in much closer contact with life than Baudelaire appears to be. "Un matin nous partons," says Baudelaire, and though he speaks occasionally as if a part of the human being has metaphorically become a part of the ship ("notre âme est un trois-mâts"), we continue to feel that Baudelaire is simply a passenger on a ship. On the other hand, Rimbaud uses phrases such as "L'eau verte pénétra ma choque de sapin"; and the immediacy of experience thus suggested continues throughout the poem.

Significant too is the fact that Rimbaud has used the first person singular pronoun, whereas Baudelaire has used the plural. Baudelaire's phrases are "nous allons," "nous imitons," "montrez-nous," "nous voulons"; the pronoun "je" does not appear in the entire poem. Rimbaud's phrases are "je descendais," "je courus," "je sais," "j'ai vu," "j'ai rêvé," and "j'ai suivi." Indeed, in Rimbaud's first stanza he rids himself of all human companionship: "Je ne me sentis plus guidé par les haleurs." He even rids himself of all man-made impediments: "Quand avec mes haleurs ont fini ces tapages"—the "tapages"

<sup>1</sup> Paris: Imp. Jouve et Cie. [1911].

of "blés flamands" and of "cotons anglais." Rimbaud, as the drunken boat, desires to be totally alone, for he is now in the open sea, "sans regretter l'œil niais des falots!" Baudelaire's voyage, however, becomes almost a social affair, for he describes again and again his fellow travelers, their reasons for traveling, and their various reactions. He maintains an objective attitude both toward the experiences of his own life and the experiences of others; he is constantly an observer. When he cannot himself experience the strangeness of distant lands, he is content to listen to the experiences of others. "Dites, qu'avez-vous vu?" he asks these others, and many of his stanzas record the experiences related by fellow voyagers, like him disillusioned with life.

From these people we learn that they all desire escape in their voyaging. Sometimes they are trying to escape their country, their home environment, or women, though for the most part they seem to have no definite reason for traveling:

Mais les vrais voyageurs sont ceux-là seuls qui partent  
Pour partir; cœurs légers, semblables aux ballons,  
De leur fatalité jamais ils ne s'écarterent,  
Et, sans savoir pourquoi, disent toujours: Allons!

But in the final stanza Baudelaire reveals the true reason for thus traveling: "Ce pays nous ennuie." The goal is "the Unknown," and it matters not what the outcome is:

Nous voulons . . .  
Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer ou Ciel, qu'importe?  
Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du nouveau!

Rimbaud, unlike Baudelaire, has had something definite in mind during his search, though he does not find it. Perhaps his search is for what may be called a sort of "Life Force," for he asks at last:

Est-ce en ces nuits sans fond que tu dors et t'exiles,  
Millions d'oiseaux d'or ô future Vigueur?

And so Rimbaud, again unlike Baudelaire, gives up his travels. He wishes to return, at the end of the poem, to Europe—to his own small pond at home where, as a boy, he sailed "Un bateau frère comme un papillon de mai." He will return to the world of men, but he will remain alone among them:

Je ne puis plus, baigné de vos langueurs, ô lames,  
Enlever leur sillage aux porteurs de cotons,  
Ni traverser l'orgueil des drapeaux et des flammes,  
Ni nager sous les yeux horribles des pontons.

Rimbaud, then, has become an introvert, and he remains anti-social, even though he will live among men. He sees his problem constantly as a highly personal one, and his view of life is always what might be termed an internal one. Only in the first person singu-



lar can the answer to life's great questions be found; in one's self must be discovered the "future Vigueur."

Baudelaire, on the other hand, maintains a social and objective outlook to the end. He does not enter into his "Unknown" alone, but with other people. His goal is not to find the answers to life's questions, but only to escape them and to escape boredom. This escape is away from, rather than into, one's self. Baudelaire's view of life, then, might be called an external one, for the search for something must be carried on with others, in the world and outside the poet. Baudelaire's *Le Voyage* is largely a pleasure trip made in search of release from ennui; Rimbaud's *Le Bateau Ivre* is the poet in search of the "élan vital," of that which makes him and life what it is. Though the two poems bear some resemblances, the poets revealed are poles apart in their outlooks upon life.

Arkansas State Teachers College

---

## REVIEWS

*The Problem of John Ford.* By H. J. OLIVER. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1955. Pp. vii + 146. \$4.50. Distributed in the U.S.A. by Cambridge University Press.

"No poet is less forgettable than Ford," declared Swinburne in the last century, and recent commentary attests the accuracy of this observation. For the last twenty years, Ford has commanded the attention of critics and scholars alike, and now H. J. Oliver has ventured another appraisal entitled *The Problem of John Ford*. The central "problem," as Oliver sees it, is that Ford attempted analytical ways of expression through the conventional forms he inherited from earlier Renaissance playwrights, that his talents lay more in exploring states of feeling than in presenting continuity of action. Ford anticipated the slow-moving analysis of a Richardson, Oliver claims; he parallels the exposition of character and the subtle insight evident later in Browning. He seemed to be groping for a "new kind of psychological drama" with "its own shape, its own climax, its own continuity"—a kind of play that, even after three subsequent centuries of experience, Eugene O'Neill attempted but could not fully achieve. Yet, Oliver concludes, though the old forms shackled Ford's genius, he nevertheless wrote a high order of drama.

Admirers of Ford should rejoice in such an appraisal. It answers the persistent comment that unusual scenes of horror and blood distinguish him from his fraternity of Renaissance playwrights, and at the same time clinches the view that he has a special appeal for modern readers. The singularity of *The Broken*

*Heart* and of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, surely, lies not in a bloody machine chair or in a heart impaled on a dagger, but rather in the exploration of Penthea's plight or in the detailed analysis of Giovanni's intellectual dilemma. A scholar, perhaps, might wish for fresh insights afforded by a deeper sounding of the age, or by a reexamination of Elizabethan dramatic technique; he might even wish that reference had been made to Max Wolff's *John Ford, ein Nachahmer Shakespeare's*, since Oliver pointed out many similarities to Shakespeare in the body of Ford's plays. But, as Oliver states in his preface, *The Problem of John Ford* was intended primarily to be a critical assessment, and in fulfillment of this intention he kept his eyes focused chiefly on the text of Ford's works. Such a procedure allows Oliver to reveal the poignancy of individual lines and scenes, to comment wisely on the function of Ford's comedy, and to trace his constant effort to find new ways of dramatic expression. Oliver has shown why Ford still commands our attention.

If admirers of Ford can find much in Oliver's assessment to praise, a few might question some of his pronouncements on earlier critics. Honest differences about Ford will perhaps always arise. What may be inferred from a work of art about its creator's values and thought will inevitably engender dispute, as C. S. Lewis and E. M. W. Tillyard have shown in *The Personal Heresy*. Different interpretations often spring from different assumptions about the nature and function of literature, not out of perversity or wrong-headedness, as Oliver sometimes suggests. Furthermore, Oliver's conclusions actually appear to support some of the views he attempts to correct. He states, for example, that former critics have unjustifiably found in Ford's tragedy an assertion of individual values and hence a questioning of the established order. But does not Ford's genius for analysis focus attention on Penthea's plight and on Giovanni's dilemma rather than on retributive justice? The soul of Ford's tragedy lies in his analysis of character, not in the plot; and though his characters, after becoming entangled in error, go to their deaths, their dilemmas affect us more than their doom. *Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner*. Ford makes us understand so fully mental and physical pain that we desire for his victims mercy rather than justice; he so poignantly probes individual states of mind that the operation of moral laws appears to be somehow unjust.

The form of tragedy Ford inherited from Shakespeare, however, demanded the operation of an inexorable logic of cause and effect in accordance with the laws of retributive justice. Wheat grew from wheat and tares sprang from tares. Justice never became an open book, to be sure, and we might even identify ourselves and sympathize with characters caught in a web of misjudgment and wrong choice. But at the resolution of the plot, which was the soul of this kind of tragedy, we must say: Error brought disaster to these unfortunate characters; it is right and proper that they go to their doom; their downfall reaffirms the universal order of justice and in so doing purges our pity and fear. Ford hardly allows us to say this. He did not, like Browning, turn away from the stage and develop the dramatic monologue, the very form of which promotes the expression of relative rather than absolute values; yet within the framework of Elizabethan tragedy, as Oliver states, Ford moved in the direction of this genre. The result was neither *Macbeth* nor *The Ring and the Book*, but *The Broken Heart* and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*; neither the resolution of a moral problem nor the direct expression of personal views, but the presentation of dilemmas resulting from the clash of individual desires, physical necessity, and the established order. Ford came very close indeed to Eugene O'Neill's achievement in *Strange Interlude*. And if O'Neill, drawing on three hundred more years of experience, could

not solve the problems of psychological drama, we could hardly expect Ford, as Oliver reminds us, to do so. But even as Ford failed to find exactly the form through which he could give his genius expression, so also he fell short of achieving the effects proper to either of the genres he attempted to fuse. Only by separating form and function can one argue against the "moral" interpretation of Ford.

GEORGE F. SENSABAUGH

Stanford University

*The Italian Influence in English Poetry from Chaucer to Southwell.* By A. LYTTON SELLS. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955. Pp. 346. \$6.75.

Professor Sells's book, for which a sequel is promised, is a rich and welcome addition to the shelves of the comparatist as well as to those of specialists in both the literatures involved. Such a study has long been needed; and while some exception may be taken to parts of the performance, the general intention is wholly admirable. The consideration of Milton, deliberately excluded (p. 12) from the present volume, should be made easier in the continuation by the study already devoted to that poet in F. T. Prince's excellent *The Italian Element in Milton's Verse* (1954).

Aside from the first two (pp. 19-67) of its fourteen chapters, *The Italian Influence in English Poetry* is essentially a study of the sixteenth century. The first chapter, on Chaucer, is a competent survey of matters long familiar to students of that poet. The second, a sort of brief appendage to the first, deals with the Scottish Chaucerians. Since these writers, by Sells's own account—and he treats only two: James I (of Scotland) and Robert Henryson—were more intimately influenced by Chaucer and by French poets than by Italian, their inclusion is almost an irrelevancy. Italian "influence" in their writings is influence at a second remove.

The third chapter (pp. 69-81) concerns Wyatt and Surrey, with whom the continuous influence of Italian upon English poetry may really be said to begin. This is followed by a chapter entitled "Travellers and Exiles," of whom the most important (pp. 90-100) were the Florios, father and son, and Giordano Bruno. Chapter V, "The Approach to Parnassus" (pp. 103-28), is less a discussion of isolable influences upon specific writers than a general survey of Italian writers whose works, translated or in the original, are known to have circulated in England during the sixteenth century. With the exception of Chapters IX-XII (pp. 212-63) the rest of the book is arranged as a series of chapter studies of Italian influence in the poetry of single figures: Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, Drayton, Greville, Southwell. The final sympathetic chapter (excepting the "Conclusion," pp. 336-38), on Southwell, is the author's most valuable and independent contribution to the theme of his book.

The mode of arrangement, the general point of view, and some of the basic assumptions adopted by the author have involved him in difficulties and inconsistencies. He deliberately excludes (p. 7), for instance, any consideration of the poetic drama (in the age of Elizabeth and James I) yet includes a chapter on Shakespeare, where plays must inevitably be discussed. And while he provides some interesting speculation about the possible influence of Italian paintings upon *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, the plays are discussed largely in the light of their Italian settings and of a hypothetical visit by Shakespeare to Venetian and possibly other north Italian territory. Again, a scheme of organ-

ization which, through anticipation, leaves Sidney, Spenser, and Shakespeare *hors concours* in the chapter (Chap. X) on "The Sonnet Books" makes that section of his book seem disappointingly dull and thin—*Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark. And it does seem of doubtful value to devote an entire chapter (Chap. XII) to a writer so patently grounded in native tradition as Drayton. In an apologetic final paragraph (p. 283) Sells himself appears to recognize the shakiness of this procedure—as he does elsewhere (p. 229) for what is probably an exaggerated estimate of the importance of the resolute but pedantic and unpoetic Florio.

We cannot properly quarrel with an Englishman for writing from a British point of view; but in a book published by an American university press and addressed, presumably, to American readers, some concessions in language and orientation might well have been made. They do not appear; and the reader, when he is not irked, is at least momentarily jarred. It would also have been helpful if Sells could have made up his mind whether he was writing of Italian influences or of *French* influences upon English poetry. The comments on Greville and Pascal (pp. 301-303), to cite but a single instance, constitute an unwarranted digression. What is possibly the weakest single feature of the book is the author's tacit assumption that a derived poetry necessarily derives from other *poetry*. Too little attention is throughout accorded the rich Italian prose with which the sixteenth-century poets were demonstrably familiar. Such an attitude may serve the aesthetic critic very well; but it reflects a variety of preciousness which the literary historian or the student of comparative literature can ill afford.

Aside from a certain professorial repetitiousness of phrase, Sells writes charmingly, with zest for his subject, with wide learning, and with sensitive response to the poetry he discusses. Negligent proofreading or lackadaisical attention, however, has permitted far too many blunders in dates, names, titles, and mechanical details—which carping readers will no doubt gleefully set to rights in triumphant marginalia. As for me, I shall be among the first to buy a copy of the book which is to carry forward the account begun in *The Italian Influence in English Poetry from Chaucer to Southwell*.

JOHN LEON LIEVSAY

University of Tennessee

*German Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases with Their English Counterparts.* By EDMUND P. KREMER. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1955. Pp. viii + 116. \$3.00.

Professor Edmund P. Kremer's *German Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases with Their English Counterparts* is a splendid addition to our collections of German proverbs. The approximately 1,350 German proverbs with English equivalents are a fair sampling of the field, representative in both content and style. The selections, having by nature the wit and wisdom of the folk-mind, are predominantly restricted to those "in use during the first half of the present century," and, in most cases, find very similar parallels in English. Professor Kremer has not translated, but has given close counterparts in English, so that he could retain the true spirit of the original, thus providing an implicit study of some national likenesses and differences in imagery and emphasis.

Whether by native appreciation or deliberate intent, Professor Kremer has given attention and proportion to certain subjects (the stock-in-trade of universal

proverb) that parallel closely the pattern of K. F. W. Wander's *Deutsches Sprichwörter-Lexikon* (Leipzig, 1863-80). If one judges from the number of proverbs recorded under the key-word, as collected by Wander, and those represented in Professor Kremer's collection on the same subject, a change of emphasis in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is immediately noted. The words *Ding*, *Mann*, *Leute*, *Weib*, *Narr*, and *Pferd*, which are high on the list (noted below) of the nineteenth-century collection, are considerably lower in Professor Kremer's representation of those in current usage. Contrariwise, Professor Kremer lifts *Feind* and *Baum* (his two highest representations, as compared with a relatively low number in Wander's *Lexikon*), *Bär*, *Tod*, *Freund*, *Esel*, *Haus*, *Frau*, and *Liebe*, into much higher frequencies of use in this century. One wonders how much the wars of this century may have influenced the wider usage of the words *Feind*, *Frau*, *Tod*, *Freund*, and *Liebe*. In both collections, *Gott* (the highest frequency subject in Wander's *Lexikon*), *Hund*, *Geld*, *Kind*, *Glück*, *Herr*, and *Katze*, are high in currency, as evidenced by the following comparative table:

Subject	Number of Proverbs in Wander's <i>Lexikon</i>	Relative Position	Number of Proverbs in E. P. Kremer Collection	Relative Position
Gott	3086	(1)	11	(3)
Ding	2267	(2)	5	(25)
Mann	2068	(3)	3	(33)
Hund	1889	(4)	10	(7)
Teufel	1790	(5)	7	(16)
Leute	1680	(6)	1	(38)
Geld	1580	(7)	11	(3)
Weib	1556	(8)	4	(26)
Kind	1367	(9)	11	(3)
Narr	1367	(9)	6	(20)
Glück	1141	(11)	8	(13)
Herr	1104	(12)	9	(10)
Mensch	1072	(13)	6	(20)
Wort	1028	(14)	4	(26)
Hand	1017	(15)	6	(20)
Pferd	1002	(16)	3	(33)
Katze	997	(17)	8	(13)
Liebe	928	(18)	9	(10)
Zeit	892	(19)	7	(16)
Kopf	889	(20)	5	(25)
Wasser	862	(21)	4	(26)
Frau	838	(22)	11	(3)
Wein	810	(23)	6	(20)
Haus	766	(24)	9	(10)
Auge	751	(25)	2	(36)
Esel	730	(26)	10	(7)
Tag	712	(27)	2	(36)
Maul	703	(28)	5	(25)
Bauer	680	(29)	7	(16)
Kuh	664	(30)	7	(16)

Subject	Number of Proverbs in Wander's <i>Lexikon</i>	Relative Position	Number of Proverbs in E. P. Kremer Collection	Relative Position
Freund	662	(31)	8	(13)
Vogel	648	(32)	4	(26)
Herz	628	(33)	5	(25)
Brot	618	(34)	3	(33)
Tod	549	(35)	10	(7)
Baum	405	?	13	(1)
Feind	260	?	13	(1)
Bär	141	?	6	(20)

Some of the most commonplace and representative proverbs in English, of course, are not found in Professor Kremer's collection; this was not his purpose. But it is to be hoped that a complementary work in this respect may be forthcoming.

The widespread generality, however, of the selections is attested to by the fact that many of the proverbs selected for inclusion by Professor Kremer have counterparts not only in English but also in French and Italian, as verified by Professor A. Arthaber in his collection *Dizionario Comparato di Proverbi e Modi Proverbiali* (Milano, 1952). Many, of course, will be recognized as timeless and universal.

There are some instances where this writer feels alternative or additional renderings in English to those given might have enriched the comparative value. The following English counterparts are also suggested for the German proverbs as given (figures in parentheses are the page references).

*Auf fremdem Acker steht stets die Saat am besten* (2): Far away fields look green; The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.

*Was nützt das Abtrocknen, wenn man nicht aus dem Regen geht* (1): What is the use of running when we are not on the right road; All's lost that is poured into a cracked dish; He carries water in a sieve; At a deaf man's door, knock all you wish; When the sack you're carrying has a tear, it's the same what you put or you don't put there.

*Anfang heiß, Mitte lau, Ende kalt* (5) Good beginning, bad ending.

*Aufgeschoben ist nicht aufgehoben* (7): All is not lost that is delayed.

*Viele Bäche machen einen Strom* (8): Many drops make a shower; Many mickle makes a muckle. (The latter proverb, as quoted by E. C. Brewer in his *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* [Philadelphia, 1894], p. 804, though less grammatically correct than "Many a little makes a mickle" as given by Professor Kremer, seems more widely known in America today.)

*Bäckerskindern muß man keine Brezeln geben* (9): Why carry coals to Newcastle?

*Lange Fädchen, Faule Mädchen* (26): A lazy tailor finds his thread too long. *Besser ehrlich gestorben, als schändlich verdorben* (40): A good death is far better and more honorable than an ill life (see Arthaber, No. 791).

*Wer andern eine Grube gräbt, fällt selbst hinein* (45): He who digs a pit for others, falls in himself. (The two foregoing English counterparts are also suggested by Professor Arthaber in his *Dizionario*, Nos. 791 and 541.)

*Halb und halb ist nicht ganz* (47): Things done by halves are never done well.

Four other listings have almost identical counterparts in English wording. Though Professor Kremer has listed very close variants, one wonders why the following well-known English versions were not given preference: *Alle Wege führen nach Rom* (109): All roads lead to Rome; *Wer zuletzt lacht, lacht am besten* (68): He who laughs last, laughs best; *Rom ward nicht an einem Tag erbaut* (84): Rome wasn't built in a day; *Schuster, bleib bei deinen Leisten!* (91): Shoemaker (or Cobbler), stick to your last!

Professor Kremer's collection shows (except for these few minor notations) a great richness and studied care in selection and representation. The time-honored proverbs frequently mentioned in textbooks of German are mostly present, but, strangely enough, *Aller Anfang ist schwer* is not noted. Only the familiar German proverbs dealing with national or racial characteristics and weather prophecy seem to have been omitted, in preference for those of wider and more generalized significance.

The American flavor is not absent; Professor Kremer states in the Preface that "special attention has been paid to current American versions." Indeed, some are startling, and one wonders if they have as yet become proverbs, secured for time, or if they may be only local or passing "smart" sayings. Their style is singularly in contrast to that of the majority; e.g.: *Nach dem Tode gilt das Geld nicht mehr* (99): You can't take it with you; *Der eine hat den Beutel, der anders das Geld* (15): Some guys have it, some guys don't; *Bäckerskindern muß man keine Brezeln geben* (9): Ever hear of carrying oats to a cayuse knee-deep in clover; *Die Dummen werden nicht alle* (20): There's a sucker born every minute; *Dem Backen geht das Kneten vor* (9): No tickee, no washee; *Die gebratenen Tauben fliegen einem nicht ins Maul* (98): Money doesn't rain down every day, and ham and eggs don't grow on the cactus; *Hans Schenck, den Herrn sieht jeder gern* (87): Nobody hates Santa Claus. On the other hand, for the proverb, *Wo dreie sind, muß einer allewege der Narr sein* (20): Two is company, three is trumphery, the well-known and more widely used American form might have been preferred: Two is company, three's a crowd.

Three counterparts (22, 27, 104) are given which may find currency or general understanding only in British areas. A vivid and fresh quality of Americanism, however, is generally present in most examples where this preference is stated; e.g., *Beten lernt man in Nöten* (14): There are no atheists in foxholes.

Not only is this volume an excellent collection of German proverbs in current use in this century, but it is also a revealing exemplification of content and style of the proverb in general.

J. BEATTIE MACLEAN

Victoria College  
Victoria, British Columbia



## BOOKS RECEIVED

### AMERICAN

- Anderson, Quentin. *The American Henry James*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1957. Pp. 369. \$6.50.
- Hilen, Andrew (editor). *The Diary of Clara Crowninshield: A European Tour with Longfellow, 1835-1836*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1956. Pp. xxxv + 304. \$5.00.
- Kindilien, Carlin T. *American Poetry in the Eighteen Nineties: A Study of American Verse, 1890-1899, Based upon the Volumes from that Period Contained in the Harris Collection of American Poetry and Plays in the Brown University Library*. Providence: Brown University Studies, Vol. XX, 1956. Pp. xv + 223. \$4.00.
- Lively, Robert A. *Fiction Fights the Civil War: An Unfinished Chapter in the Literary History of the American People*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957. Pp. viii + 230. \$5.00.
- Stovall, Floyd (editor). *Eight American Authors: A Review of Research and Criticism*. New York: Modern Language Association of America, Revolving Fund Series, No. 19, 1956. Pp. xv + 418. \$3.75.

### ENGLISH

- Evans, G. Blakemore (editor). Supplement to *Henry IV, Part 1*. A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Shakespeare Association of America, 1956. Pp. iv + 121. \$4.50.
- Giffin, Mary. *Studies on Chaucer and His Audience*. Hull, Quebec: Les Éditions "L'Éclair," 1956. Pp. 127. \$4.75.
- Houtchens, Lawrence H., and Carolyn Washburn Houtchens (editors). *Leigh Hunt's Literary Criticism. With an Essay of Evaluation by Clarence DeWitt Thorpe*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1956. Pp. xiii + 732. \$8.50.
- Macdonald, Allan Houston. *Richard Hovey, Man and Craftsman*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1957. Pp. xiii + 265. \$5.00.
- Nicoll, Allardyce. *The Elizabethans*. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1957. Pp. viii + 174. \$5.00.
- Raysor, Thomas M. (editor). *The English Romantic Poets: A Review of Research*. Revised edition. New York: Modern Language Association of America, Revolving Fund Series, No. 18, 1956. Pp. 307.
- Texas, University of. *Studies in English*. Vol. XXXV, 1956. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1956. Pp. 134. \$1.00.
- Ullmann, S. O. A. (compiler). *Men, Books, and Mountains: Essays by Leslie Stephen*. Collected, with an Introduction. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956. Pp. 247. \$3.50.
- van Zutphen, J. P. W. M. (editor). *A Litol Tretys on the Seven Deadly Sins, by Richard Lavynham, O. Carm.* Edited with an Introduction, Notes, a Glossarial Index, etc., from MS. Harley 211 in the British Museum, with variants from thirteen other copies. Rome: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1956. Pp. c + 134.
- Walker, Alice, and John Dover Wilson (editors). *Othello*. Cambridge: At the University Press, New Shakespeare Edition, 1957. Pp. lxi + 246. \$3.00.
- Wiles, R. M. *Serial Publication in England Before 1750*. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1957. Pp. xv + 391. \$9.50.

- Wiley, Basil. *More Nineteenth Century Studies: A Group of Honest Doubters*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1956. Pp. 304. \$4.00.
- Wilson, Marion L. *The Tragedy of Hamlet Told by Horatio*. With the full text of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and 89 illustrations. With the collaboration of J. M. Wilson. Enschede, The Netherlands: "De Viking," published by and copy-right by M. L. Wilson, 1956. Pp. 632.

## GERMAN

- Bergel, Kurt. *Georg Brandes und Arthur Schnitzler: Ein Briefwechsel*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Publications in Modern Philology, Vol. 46, 1956. Pp. 240. \$3.00.
- Bollnow, Otto Friedrich. *Rilke. Zweite, erweiterte Auflage*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1956. Pp. 352. DM 18.-.
- Pochmann, Henry A. *German Culture in America: Philosophical and Literary Influence, 1600-1900*. With the assistance of Arthur B. Schultz and others. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1957. Pp. xv + 865. \$7.50.
- Thomas, R. Hinton. *Thomas Mann: The Mediation of Art*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1956. Pp. 188. \$4.00.
- Wittke, Carl. *The German-Language Press in America*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1957. Pp. vi + 311. \$6.50.

## ROMANCE LANGUAGES

- Adler, Alfred. *Sens et composition du Jeu de la feuillée*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1956. Pp. 46. \$2.00.
- Alvarado, Lisandro. *Obras Completas. Vol. V: Historia de la Revolución Federal en Venezuela*. Caracas: Ministerio de Educación, 1956. Pp. xv + 662.
- Bart, Benjamin F. *Flaubert's Landscape Descriptions*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1956. Pp. vii + 70. \$2.50.
- Besterman, Theodore. *Saint Jean de Brébeuf: Les Relations de ce qui s'est passé au pays des Hurons (1635-1648)*. Genève: Librairie E. Droz, Textes Littéraires Français, No. 72, 1957. Pp. xxvii + 228. 12.-.
- Brée, Germaine, and Margaret Guiton. *An Age of Fiction: The French Novel from Gide to Camus*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1957. Pp. vi + 242. \$5.00.
- Dante Society. *Seventy-fourth Annual Report, with Accompanying Papers*. Cambridge: Dante Society of America, Harvard University, 1956. Pp. xii + 63.
- Garapon, Robert. *La Fantaisie verbale et le comique dans le théâtre français du Moyen Âge à la fin du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1957. Pp. 368.
- Gicovate, Bernard. *Julio Herrera y Reissig and the Symbolists*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957. Pp. vi + 106. \$2.00.
- Giraud, Raymond. *The Unheroic Hero in the Novels of Stendhal, Balzac, and Flaubert*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1957. Pp. 240. \$5.00.
- Golino, Carlo L. (editor). *Carlo de' Dottori's "Il Parnaso"*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Publications in Modern Philology, Vol. 48, 1957. Pp. viii + 175. \$2.25.
- Ineichen, Gustav (editor). *Guillaume de Lorris: Der Rosenroman*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, Philologische Studien und Quellen, 1956. Pp. 86. DM 6,40.
- Lafitte, Lucette. *Antoine Chasseur. Dessins de Walter Goetz*. Cambridge: Aux Presses Universitaires, 1956. Pp. 62. \$0.50.

- Le Sage, Laurent. *L'Œuvre de Jean Giraudoux: Essai de bibliographie chronologique*. Paris: Librairie Nizet; University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University, Library Studies, No. 4, 1956. Pp. 48. \$0.50.
- Lorenz, Erika. Rubén Darío: "Bajo el divino imperio de la música." Hamburg: Hamburger Romanistische Studien, Ibero-Amerikanische Reihe, Band 24, Cram. de Gruyter Co., 1956. Pp. 103.
- Mora, José Ferrater. Ortega y Gasset: An Outline of His Philosophy. New Haven: Yale University Studies in Modern European Literature and Thought, 1957. Pp. 69. \$2.50.
- Mortier, Roland. Les "Archives Littéraires de l'Europe" (1804-1808) et le Cosmopolitisme Littéraire sous le Premier Empire. Bruxelles: Palais des Académies, Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques, Mémoires, Tome LI, Fascicule 4 et dernier, No. 1674, 1957. Pp. 252. 140.-.
- Rickard, P. Britain in Medieval French Literature, 1100-1500. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1956. Pp. ix + 282. \$6.50.
- Tilander, Gunnar. La Vénérerie de Twiti: Le plus ancien traité de chasse écrit en Angleterre. La version anglaise du même traité et Craft of Venerie. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, Cynegetica, Vol. II, 1956. Pp. 100.
- (editor). Vidal Mayor: Traducción Aragonesa de la Obra *In Excelsis Dei Thesauris* de Vidal de Canellas. Vol. I: Introducción y reproducción de las miniaturas del manuscrito Perrins 112. Vol. II: Texto. Vol. III: Vocabulario. Lund: Håkan Ohlssons Boktryckeri, Leges Hispanicae Medii Aevi, Vols. IV, V, and VI, 1956. Vol. I, 108 pp. plus 32 plates; Vol. II, 543 pp.; Vol. III, 341 pp. Distributed in Sweden by Almqvist & Wiksells; in Paris by Librairie d'Argences. 120 coronas suecas for the 3 volumes.

## GENERAL

- Bibliotheca Celtica. A Register of Publications Relating to Wales and the Celtic Peoples and Languages. Third Series, Vol. III, 1955. Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1956. Pp. 132. 7s. 6d.
- Borland, Harold H. Nietzsche's Influence on Swedish Literature, with Special Reference to Strindberg, Ola Hansson, Heidenstam and Fröding. Göteborg: Elanders Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, Göteborgs Kungl. Vetenskaps- och Vitterhets-Samhälles Handlingar, Sjätte Följden, Ser. A, Band 6, No. 3, 1956. Pp. 177. Kr. 15.-.
- Bowers, Fredson (editor). Studies in Bibliography: Papers of the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, Vol. 9, 1957. Charlottesville: Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, 1957. Pp. 273. \$6.00.
- Clark, Donald Lemen. Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Education. New York: Columbia University Press, 1957. Pp. xii + 285. \$4.50.
- Highet, Gilbert. The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature. New York: Oxford University Press, Galaxy Books, No. 5, 1957. Pp. xxxviii + 763. \$2.95.
- Kinneavy, Brother James Leo, F.S.C. A Study of Three Contemporary Theories of Lyric Poetry. A dissertation. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1956. Pp. vii + 175. \$2.00.
- Studier i Modern Språkvetenskap utgivna av nyfilologiska sällskapet i Stockholm (Stockholm Studies in Modern Philology, with a Bibliography of Swedish Works on English, German, and Romance Philology), Vol. XIX, 1952-55. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri, 1956. Pp. 215. 30.00 kr.
- Turville-Petre, G. (editor). Hervarar Saga ok Heiðreks. Introduction by Christopher Tolkien. London: University College London, Viking Society for Northern Research, Text Series, Vol. II, 1956. Pp. xx + 145. 12/-; to members 10/-.







# Magallanes

## Un Noble Capitán

Spanish translation of  
*So Noble a Captain*,  
by Charles McKew Parr  
Thomas Y. Crowell Co.

### *Razón y Fe*, Madrid (P. Meseguer)

Esta excelente historia de una gesta grandiosa y profundamente trágica se lee con creciente interés, con pasión. El autor ha sabido vivir hasta en sus últimas pormenores la vida y el ambiente de sus héroes. Hay que reconocer que también ha sabido transmitir al lector una viva sensación de presencia. Al terminar el libro casi nos parece que hemos hecho el viaje nosotros mismos. El libro es de sólida historia y de excepcional vigor narrativo.

### *Revista Interamericana de Bibliografía* (Ramón Caños Montalva)

Finaliza la obra con la portentosa culminación de la magna empresa, "la aventura más audaz de la humanidad." Esperamos que su pronta traducción al castellano permita su divulgación y aprovechamiento con la amplitud que merece.

### *El Diario de Nueva York*

Una documentación abundantísima y una argumentación rica en razonamientos lógicos, aparte de una relación completa de todas las empresas acometidas por los descubridores intrépidos, alcanzan para Magallanes la justa restitución de su fama de noble capitán.

### *Hispania* (William Marion Miller)

Mr. Parr's work deserves to be well known and carefully read. It may well become for many years the definitive volume in English on this great, but tragic, figure.

### *Hispanic American Historical Review* (Charles Nowell)

The first full-length biography of Magellan in English to appear since the publication of Guillemard's over sixty years ago. . . . Parr presents a life of the famous navigator offering several new interpretations and many original points of view.

### *Library Journal* (Joseph A. Borome)

Recommended for large public, college, and university libraries.

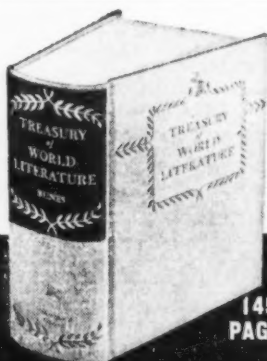
### *Mid-America* (Jaroslav Flys)

The narrative is one from real life and would have for students more value than the correlative readings generally chosen from fiction. All in all we have in this book, or in selected chapters from it, material calculated to interest, to educate, to instruct the reader by increasing his knowledge of the Spanish language while at the same time adding to his comprehension of the historical aspects of the great age of discovery and colonization.

Madrid: Editorial Sapientia, 1955. 528 pp. 22 illustrations. \$3.00

American agent: McKew Parr Library, Chester, Connecticut

Distributed through college bookstores



## Treasury of World Literature

Dagobert D. Runes, Editor

PHILOSOPHICAL LIBRARY, Publishers, 15 E. 40th St., Desk 615, New York 16, N. Y.

EVERY period from prehistory to 20th century contemporary writers, as well as every literary genre, is represented—poetry, novel, drama, philosophy, belles lettres, and some Eastern forms that do not lend themselves to ready classification by Western categories.

Many of the selections are to be found in print *nowhere else today*. Some appear here in English translation for the first time. Each selection is prefaced by a condensed biographical sketch, placing the author in world literature, citing his major works, and including a brief critical appraisal.

*"...generously endowed with unfamiliar gems ...edited with exceptional taste and wide erudition. ... It deserves a place in every well-rounded library."*—Saturday Review Syndicate

### A Magnificent Gift

Special De Luxe Gold Imprinted

Library Edition . . . \$15.

Student's Edition \$10.

*Expedite shipment by prepayment*

MODERN LANGUAGE QUARTERLY  
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON  
SEATTLE 5

Pollock Crown

Parrington Hall

Entered at Postoffice as Second Class Matter, Seattle, Washington



